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Friday
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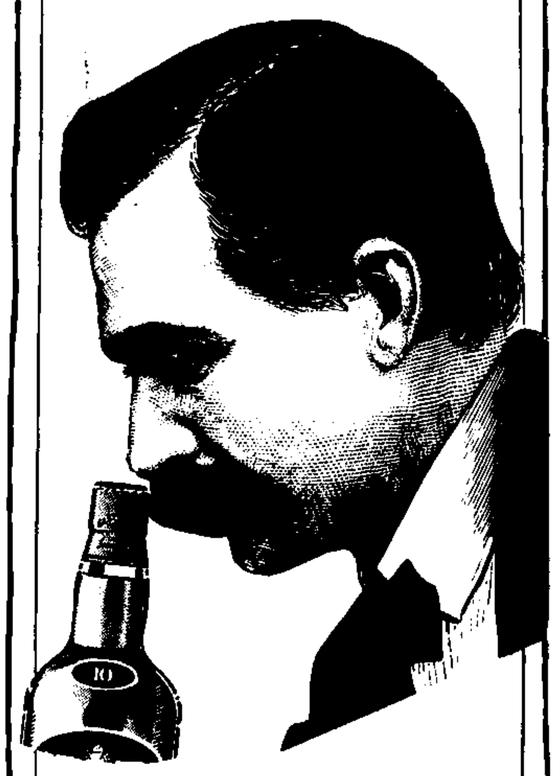

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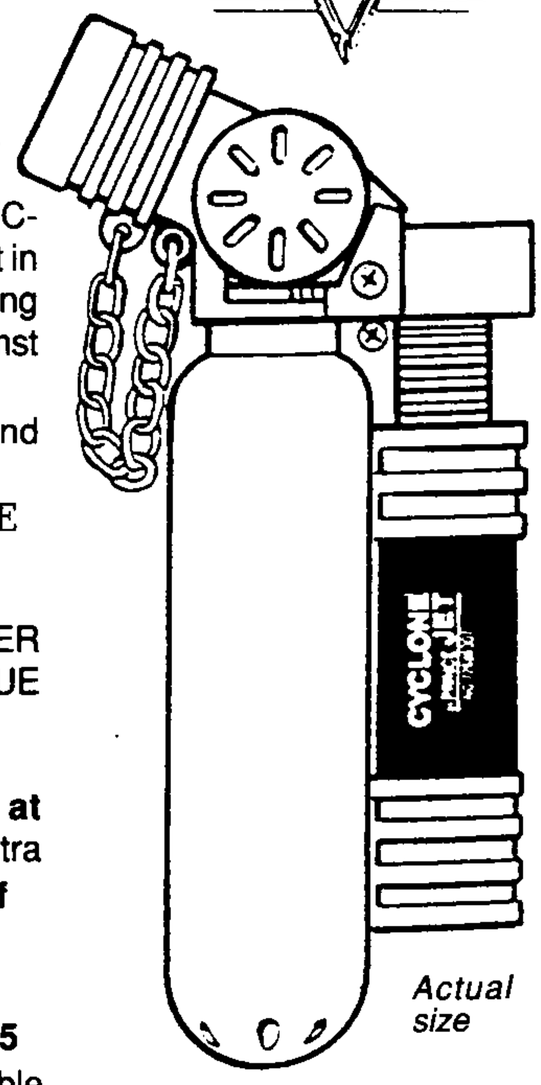

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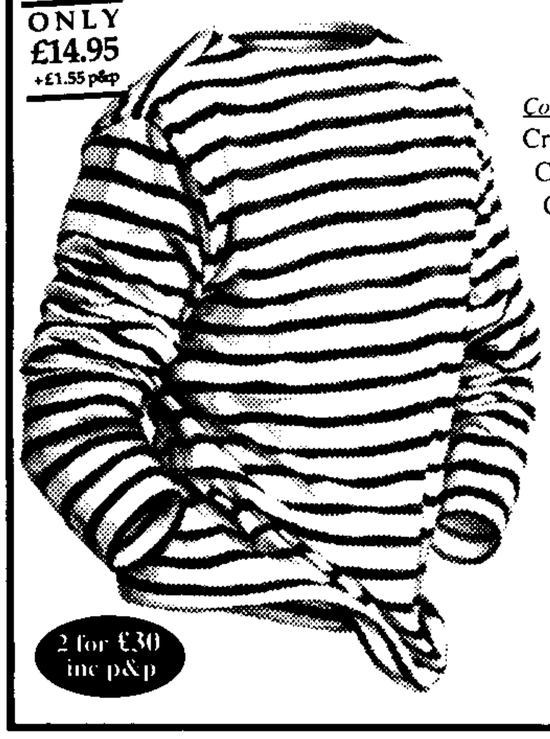

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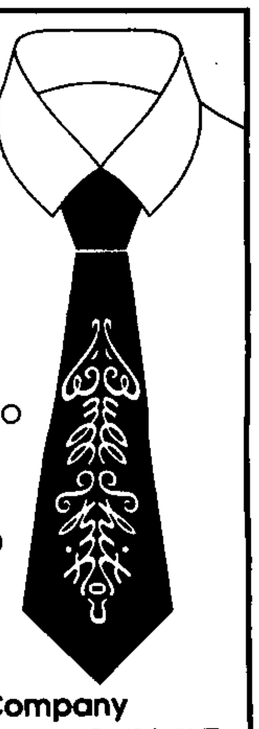

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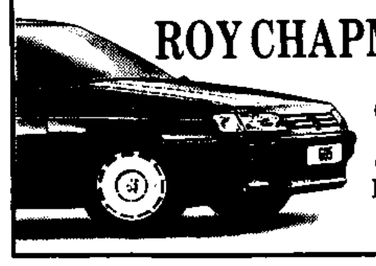

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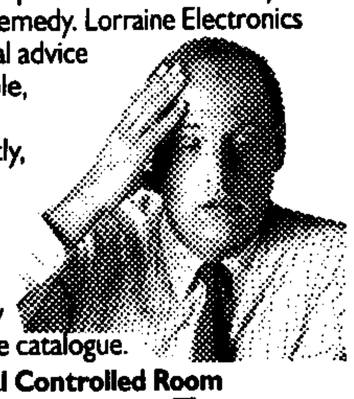

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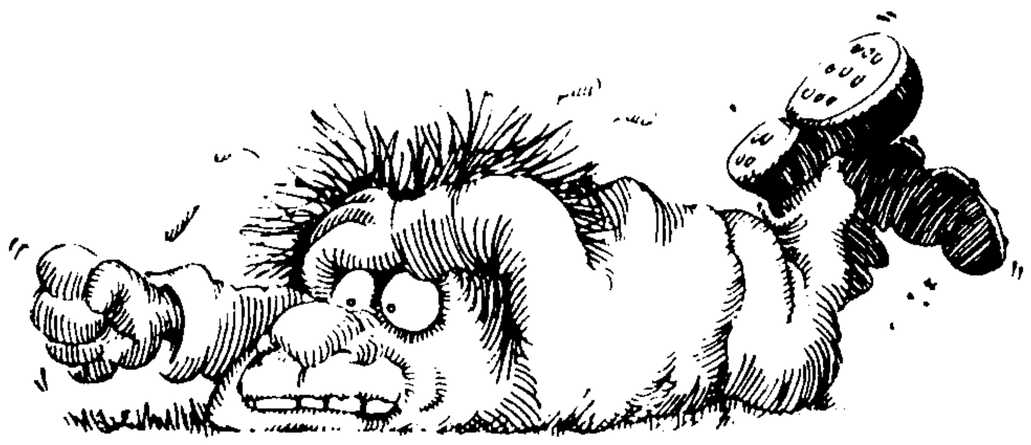

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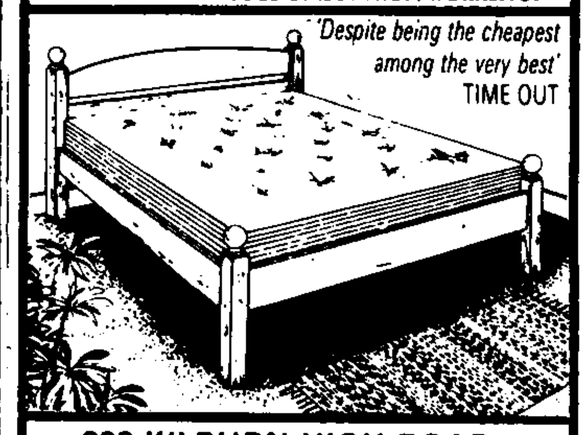

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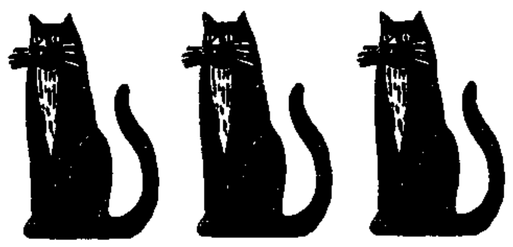

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Pilsner Urquell

Gnome

HER Majesty The Queen has finally come to her senses and agreed to pay income tax. The voice of the People has made itself heard in the land and the monarchy has had no choice but to submit to the public will. And nowhere has the nation been better represented than in the newspapers of the Gnome Corporation: the *Sunday Filth*, the *Daily Filth*, *News of the Filth* and, most influentially of all, the *Yob*. With its telling front page editorial, "Cough up, you tight-fisted old cow or it's Tumbril Time Ma'am!", The Yob caught the mood of Britain perfectly. No wonder the Queen capitulated.

There does, however, remain one vital question in many people's minds. Should I pay income tax?

There are arguments on both side of this hugely complex question and anyone who wishes to hear them should consult my lawyers.

The answer for the time being must, however, remain: "No, I shouldn't." My personal wealth has been greatly exaggerated, as has my role in British politics. I am merely a humble citizen of a small island (Grand Cayman) and, as you would expect, I pay the full legal rate to the appropriate authorities (£0.00 pa).

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Christmas presents? The **PRIVATE EYE 1993 CALENDAR** and/or a year's subscription — perfect. See page 29 and the back cover.

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COLOUR SECTION

THE CURSE of Peter Carter-Fuck, the world's most expensive libel solicitor, continues to haunt his clients.

In the last *Eye* we reported how a string of libel plaintiffs represented by the solicitor's firm had come a cropper in court — Jani Allan, Mona Bauwens and Mitch Mitchell. Latest to rue the day that he entrusted the vindication of his good name to Carter-Fuck is Bill "Interesting" Roache, the *Coronation Street* star who sued the *Sun* for libel and won £50,000 plus an award for costs, even though the newspaper had paid £50,000 into court prior to trial.

The court of appeal has since found in favour of the *Sun* with regard to costs, and Roache's bill will now swallow up his entire award of damages, plus several thousand pounds more. The day after the appeal court's finding was announced, Carter-Fuck whinged to the *Daily Torygraph* how this proved that libel plaintiffs were unfairly treated.

The truth is that Roache and Carter-Fuck gambled and lost.

Not even chancellor Norman Lamont has escaped the Carter-Fuck Curse, for it was Carter-Fuck's firm who charged Lamont £23,000 — £4,000 of which was covered by Her Majesty's treasury — to evict sex therapist Sarah Dale from the chancellor's Kensington house (through the novel device of threatening her with a defamation writ for bringing Lamont's property into disrepute). The sum of £4,000 is a staggering amount to expend on a press statement and handling press inquiries that arose from it, just as £19,000 is a staggering amount to expend on evicting a tenant (especially when the tenant agrees to vacate the property).

And there appear to be conflicting accounts from treasury officials and Carter-Fuck partner Andrew Stephenson about how much of the £23,000 went on the defamation/eviction proceedings and how much on the press statement.

Perhaps an explanation for these amazing sums can be found in a letter Peter Carter-Fuck recently wrote to *The Times* listing his top ten favourite films. These included *Double Indemnity*, *I'm Alright Jack*, and — most revealing of all — *La Grande Illusion*.

THE *Eye* has already highlighted the bizarre attempts by sack-happy British Coal, unable to find work for its own unemployed, to flog off its "expertise" in job resettlement to other industries shedding big numbers of workers.

But the initiative now has the ring of farce to it, to judge by a recent letter from the manager of Drakelow B and C power stations in Staffordshire to local employers.

As the manager rightly says, the stations are undergoing "continual organisational restructuring" (aka mass redundancies and the closure of Drakelow B), bringing large numbers of skilled unemployed on to the local job market.

Any local employer interested in recruiting (some hope in this climate) should contact... the British Coal Enterprise Job Shop at Drakelow.

That an electricity generator should now hire British Coal to help solve its redundancy problems (caused perhaps by the switch to gas-powered stations?) is a cruel irony of which only the British are capable.

AN IMPORTANT letter comes to the *Eye* from Sir David "Aptly" Napley, the brilliant and celebrated solicitor and his partner June Ruskin. They write on behalf of their client, Mr Christopher Bourke, who is the stipendiary magistrate at London's Clerkenwell court.

In our issue of 14 August we referred to Mr Bourke's work at the department of the director for public prosecutions during the prosecution of Judith Ward for an IRA bombing in the 1970s. In this piece we suggested that Mr Bourke had written to the defence assuring them that all relevant documents had been disclosed, when they had not been; and that Mr Bourke had signed an affidavit during the recent successful appeal of Judith Ward to the effect that he "was in such a junior post at the DPP that he was not in a position to know whether the facts he had set out in his letter were correct or not".

Neither point was correct, as Sir David points out. He asks us to put the facts right, and we are happy to do so in Sir David's own words.

Sir David writes that in his letter to the defence in 1974 on the Judith Ward case, Mr Bourke, for the DPP, wrote: "Extensive inquiries have been made in the Kilburn area by the police and no trace of Joe Mooney or Jane Mooney has been found.

"In the course of the appeal (earlier this year)", writes Sir David, "the statement that no trace of the existence of a Joe Mooney or a Jane Mooney had been found was fully acknowledged to be inaccurate. In 1974, our client would certainly have assumed (as he still does) that this information... had come directly from the police."

Sir David's letter goes on: "It is equally inaccurate to assert, as does your piece, that Mr Bourke's affidavit explained that he was in such a junior post that he did not know the facts. Indeed, the situation was quite the reverse. It stated: 'I was not involved in the conduct of this case and, as with most letters brought for signature by an assistant solicitor (the supervising rank), I did not have nor was expected to have any detailed knowledge of the matters referred to. The practice of obtaining a signature from an officer of a supervisory rank was in order to show the authorisation of the department and was not meant to imply a personal knowledge'."

We are happy to accept that Mr Bourke's not knowing that a statement in his letter was false was not because he was too junior an officer at the DPP's office, but because he was too senior.

We also agree that Mr Bourke, then and now, believes in the maximum disclosure of prosecution evidence to the defence.

TWO fascinating questions are being asked at the *Mirror* at the moment:

- Why does David Montgomery ring Rupert Murdoch so frequently — even when Mr Murdoch is in Italy?
- Why are Montgomery and his gang meeting executives from News International at the Howard Hotel? And why are the News International men arriving at the hotel in *Daily Mirror* cars?

"Even the time he's living on is borrowed"

STREET of SHAME

THE NAME of Clive (Lord) Hollick does not always raise a cheer at Mirror Group, where the new management under chief executive David Montgomery is sacking people all over the place and laying waste to important assets such as the *Mirror* library.

Hollick is often cited by Montgomery as proof that the *Daily Mirror* will keep its radical, pro-Labour path; for, after all, Hollick is a Labour peer whose "stability" has been applauded to the skies by the usually shy administrator to the Maxwell estate (and effective owner of the *Mirror*), John Talbot, of accountants Arthur Anderson.

Seven years of being told by Robert Maxwell of his deep loyalty to the Labour party while he sacked 3,000 workers, obliterated the National Union of Journalists at Pergamon and plundered the pension fund, have made *Mirror* hacks a little sceptical of socialist tycoons. They were also aware of Maxwell's "off-the-shelf" approach to Labour peers. Lord Williams of Elver was a close business associate of Maxwell. So was Lord Donoughue. So was Lord Silkin, a former Labour attorney-general, and even Lord Elwyn Jones, a former Labour lord chancellor.

Hollick has said nothing at all about his colleague Montgomery's policy of sacking 100 journalists without even contacting them first and by using the time-honoured device of getting them to come into work and then barring their entry to the building. When other Labour luminaries like Neil Kinnock and John Smith expressed concern, Hollick was silent.

Not all Labour supporters are tremendous admirers of Lord Hollick. Recently a member of the MSF trade union, Peter Macey, wrote to the union's executive to complain that MSF had allowed its logo to be used by Unity Financial Services, which offered exclusive services (such as money-lending) to MSF members.

Mr Macey pointed out that Unity is part-owned by Safeguard Financial Holdings, which in turn is owned by Lord Hollick's firm, MAI. Many young people in Safeguard insurance shops, wrote Macey, work for £3,000 a year or less for a 42-hour week, while top MAI executives are paid in gold bars. (Hollick's salary is £350,000 a year, plus share options).

In a letter to Michael Meacher MP last year, Mr Macey drew attention to companies that take over pension funds. He said he inquired about his own pension fund when his firm of insurance brokers, Robt Bradford and Co Ltd, was taken over by MAI in the mid-1980s. Macey wrote that he was made redundant a month before the £6m pension fund was also taken over. He also enclosed figures for MAI in 1986 and 1987 which showed that although the number of employees had risen, as had wages and salaries, pension contributions actually fell from £3.1m in 1986 to £2.9m in 1987.

It was in 1987 that a disgruntled insurance broker David Gyngell took MAI to court over a management agreement he claimed had been broken. Mr Justice Whitford said he was "wholly with the plaintiff on merit". The company's attempt to end the agreement was, he said, "as morally shabby as it was legally indefensible".

THE *Sunday Times* worked itself up into a foaming lather of indignation last weekend at the ease with which one can obtain details of the bank accounts of prominent public figures via private detective agencies.

Can this possibly be the same *Sunday Times* which a few years ago hired a dodgy private investigator to confirm, by underhand means, that Denis Thatcher was a signatory to a bank account belonging to a company run by his son, Mark?

Last weekend's *Sunday Times* was also indignant at how long it had taken Brenda to come round to the idea of paying tax. "The Queen's move is too little, too late," it grumbled. "It is unlikely she will be taxed on the same basis as her subjects."

Presumably this cannot be the same *Sunday Times* whose proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, was exposed in a Channel 4 programme two years ago as "a tax-dodger on a massive scale"?

THE FIRST instalment of Stephen Glover's book about the *Indescribablyboring*, serialised in the *Observer* last Sunday, was read with great interest by hacks at City Road. Some, however, were surprised by his account of "the great mistress crisis".

In the early days of the *Indie*, as Glover related, Andreas Whittam Strobes discovered that his bouffant-haired deputy editor, Matthew Symonds, had taken his mistress to the SDP conference in Harrogate and had claimed the cost of their double-room on expenses. Strobes wanted to sack the errant lothario forthwith, but Glover pleaded for clemency, pointing out that the room had only cost £10 more than a single: no one should be fired for such a trifling sum.

However, this was not Symonds's main offence. He also took his mistress to Washington DC at the *Independent*'s expense — and then on to New York, where they stayed at the Algonquin Hotel. Strangely, Glover's account omits to mention this episode.

Meanwhile, back at City Road, Whittam Strobes and Symonds have now thrown themselves enthusiastically into promoting the *Indie*'s hugely self-important "manifesto for national recovery". But not all their colleagues share their reverence for this fatuous document. Hacks in the paper's business section have circulated the following commentary:

"That 11-point plan in full:

1. Slash interest rates. Create sense of panic and collapse in pound. Provide sharp boost to import prices, fuelling wage demands and inflation.

2. Further distort housing market by handing out more subsidies to owner occupiers, thus boosting asset price inflation..."

And so on. We can only hope that this disrespectful document is not brought to Strobes's attention.

FOLLOWING the recent purges at the *Sunday Express*, hacks who fear they may be next in line for the sack are turning to former deputy editor of the *Sunday Mirror*, Peter Miller, for advice on how to take on Eve Pollard.

Miller, as *Eye* readers may recall, was evicted by la Bollard during her reign at the *Mirror*. Last year he took her to an industrial tribunal and won, after Bollard had been demolished by a devastating cross-examination from Miller's barrister, Simeon Maskrey. (Shortly afterwards, according to a no doubt apocryphal story, a shaken Bollard muttered: "If I ever get divorced, I want that man Maskrey on my side.")

One hack to draw the obvious conclusion is Graham Lord, the *Sunday Express*'s veteran literary editor who was fired last month. When his case for unfair dismissal is finally heard, Bollard will find herself being cross-examined by the selfsame Simeon Maskrey.

A name which may be mentioned during the hearing is Faithmist Ltd, the off-the-shelf company which was revealed in the *Eye* last year to be a conduit for some of Bollard's earnings. The two directors are Bollard herself (or "Lady Evelyn Lloyd", as she incorrectly styles herself on the company's records, perhaps under the illusion that she is the daughter of an earl) and her husband, Sir Nick.

Her particulars include the line: "Occupation: TV presenter." Are milady's employers at United Newspapers aware that she apparently considers editing the *Sunday Express* to be a mere sideline to her more important role as a panellist on *Through The Keyhole*?

WHEN EVE Pollard arrived at the *Sunday Express*, sales (under the temporary editorship of Henry McRory) were at 1,668,000.

A year or so later, after a tabloid relaunch and a massive TV advertising spend, sales are now at 1,680,000.

Although the official budget for *Sunday Express* advertising was £5m, other budgets have been raided — in particular, £1m was diverted from the *Daily Star*'s advertising budget, much to the chagrin of its editor, Brian Hitchen.

However, Lady Lloyd (incensed apparently at embittered hacks' description of her as "Rhino Arse") has not been neglecting her extra-curricular business activities. In October she interrupted her stay at the Labour party conference in Blackpool to helicopter back to London. The reason? Not some important editorial matter that required her presence in the office, but her agreement to host a private view party for painter Jack Vitriano.

She stayed at the party for half an hour, picked up the painting that was her agreed fee for acting as social hostess, then helicoptered back to Blackpool. No wonder Lady Lloyd and her husband Sir Nick Lloyd have acquired a new joint nickname: *The Freelloyders.*

AS ONE would expect from the official journal of a society for high-IQ types, *Mensa Magazine* has had a staggeringly original idea for its December issue — asking contributors to choose their books of the year.

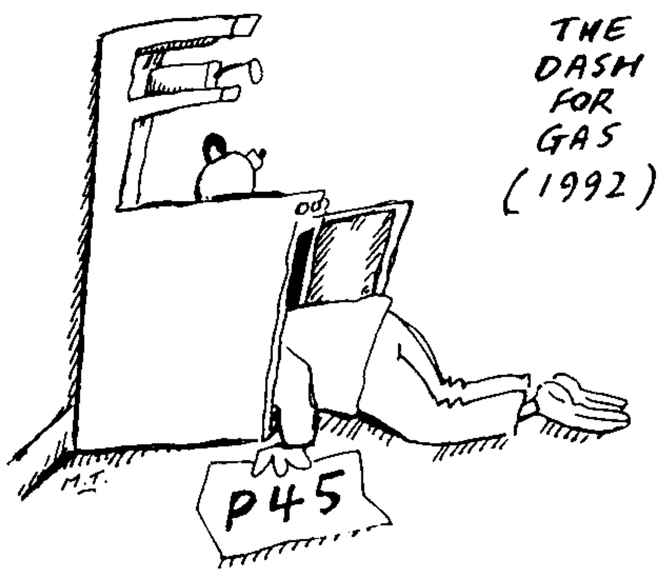
This otherwise uninteresting yawnfest is enlivened by the contribution of our old chum Garry "Gal" Bushell, the distinguished *Sun* columnist, who nominates William Shawcross's biography of his boss, Rupert Murdoch. The Digger, according to Bushell, "is a genuine colossus bestriding the global communications business, a man who has revolutionised the British newspaper industry and the nation's viewing habits. This book tells you how to do it."

In its next issue, *Mensa Magazine* promises a guide to the "very best" in television. Will Garry manage to include a BSkyB plug? Watch this space.

Rommet

THE HEAD of the trade and industry department's coal review team has been announced: it is Peter Loughead, a DTI civil servant in the financial services division.

By chance, no doubt purely coincidental, the division was transferred to the treasury last June in the post-election reorganisation of the DTI. For the past six months Mr Loughead has been brainwashed in treasury ways, and it will be the treasury that decides what is to be done with the mining industry. A very smooth operation by the treasury-dominated civil service...



IF THE rail privatisation bill (now officially "delayed", ho-ho) isn't shelved, it will be changed out of all recognition. Either way, the future looks bleak for its reluctant author, ambitious under-secretary Philip Wood.

He is far-sighted enough to be able to discern, even on a cloudy day, the distinct outlines of a Siberian power station to which he (like his opposite number at energy who devised the comparatively realistic coal butchery scheme) will shortly be consigned.

How ironic if Wood were to be superseded by Edward Osmotherley who, just like his minister, Nicholas Ridley, refused to touch rail privatisation with a barge-pole, and was thus cast into darkness by Cecil Parkinson, whose lust for privatisation was unbridled.

Parkinson's successor, the relatively well-balanced MacGregor, has failed to arouse any genuine interest among UK investors and is now reduced to importuning American (of all people) railwaymen to take over the choicer morsels of the UK rail network. This follows an inglorious effort to induce the French to assume responsibility for the East Coast (King's Cross-Edinburgh) mainline, and also to build and operate the Channel tunnel rail link, without, of course, the massive subsidy demanded by the UK private sector in the shape of Trafalgar House.

The BR brew has not been fortified by the recent (much unpublished) Price Waterhouse report confirming what BR has always known — that rail freight, under any realistic allocation of overhead costs, is unprofitable and thus unsaleable, except on terms which would undermine the passenger services.

Of these, one alone is making real money, the so-called Gatwick Express. But whoever carries that off could face tough competition from the other Gatwick services, an integral part of BR's Network South East, which would remain in public ownership.

PS: QUESTION: How do you travel from Victoria to Gatwick Airport without being taken for a ride? Answer: Avoid the InterCity Gatwick Express service.

This is easier said than done, because BR doesn't exactly go out of its way to tell you about the cheaper alternative — the ordinary Network South East services which take three or four minutes longer but are just as frequent.

You book to Three Bridges (the next station after Gatwick) and get off at Gatwick having saved nearly £2. The fare is £6.10, compared with £8 charged by the Gatwick Express for this short journey. But the ordinary NSE services do not mention Gatwick on the departure indicators at Victoria, while at Gatwick station the platform signs show the returning trains as terminating at Clapham Junction.

If and when the Gatwick Express is privatised, Network South East will presumably become less secretive about the cheaper alternative and thus reduce opportunities for Branson Rail or whoever takes over.

JOHN REDWOOD, ultra-Thatcherite guardian of the public purse at the department of the environment, was so infuriated by the *Eye*'s attack on him for giving away so much taxpayers' money to Tarmac that he has decided to give some more.

In a written parliamentary answer on 25 November, he blandly released yet another £5m to add to the £50m he has already dished out to this big contributor to Tory party funds.

The reason for the huge pay-out, as *Eye* readers must now know, is that Tarmac has been good enough to take over the projects division of the vast Property Services Agency.

Meanwhile, in another burst of free enterprise, Mr Redwood has insisted that PSA Projects make an immediate 32 per cent cut in fees already earned in the period up to March this year. This means that the new owners after March, Tarmac, will only have to cut their fees by 15 per cent — not 20 per cent as already negotiated. Is that what Winston Churchill meant when he referred to the Tory party's habit of extending the "open hand at the public purse"?

WHEN the Commons finally got round to debating the devastating Bingham report on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, the Labour benches were astonished by Norman Lamont, the gifted and brilliant chancellor of the exchequer.

Since Labour was demanding no less than the resignation of another gifted individual, Robin Leigh-Pemberton, governor of the Bank of England, many felt it only right and proper that the chancellor should have been there to defend the governor.

But it was a Friday, and Lamont clearly felt it wasn't a matter for him. He left the job to his economic secretary, Anthony Nelson, the plummy-voiced MP for Chichester.

Mr Nelson shares his boss's enthusiasm for the governor of the Bank. Like Lamont, Nelson knows all about banking. Like Lamont, he was educated at Cambridge. And like Lamont he is a banker and learnt his trade at Rothschild's.

A RATHER crabby contribution was made to the debate on the government's housing and urban development bill last month by Patrick Nicholls, Tory MP for Teignbridge.

He was not altogether pleased with the government's plans to help leaseholders, mainly in London. Indeed, he was very worried about it, even though, as he conceded, the proposal had been in the party's election manifesto. As he quaintly put it: "We are dealing with a serious matter because we are taking peoples' property away against their will".

MPs were puzzled. *Whose* property exactly? Surely the good people of Teignbridge, a sleepy resort in Devon, cannot have been too concerned about leasehold enfranchisement in London? The mystery was quickly solved by Nicholls at the start of his speech. "I declare my interest as a parliamentary consultant to Port Enterprises Ltd, to the Waterfront Partnership and to Howard de Walden Estates," he said.

WALWORTH ROAD, continuing its dictatorship over the Labour party, is trying to avoid contests among its candidates who will stand in the European parliamentary elections in March.

Instead of telling constituency parties to invite applications from would-be MEPs, as happens with Westminster elections, it has told them to ask local parties to vote on whether they want a contest at all. The hope is that, with the European parliament being so remote, most will say they are happy to let the sitting member sit, and he or she can be relied on to do whatever the party apparatus wants for fear of being targeted for reselection next time.

Some seats have such massive majorities that selection as a Labour candidate is equivalent to a life's season ticket on board the Strasbourg gravy train.

'Backbiter'

ORCADIAN NEWS

WILL THE report by Lord Clyde following his long inquiry into the scandal of Orkney's non-existent satanic abuse problems have any effect? For social workers in Orkney and on the mainland it seems to be "business as usual".

Lord Clyde severely criticized Liz McLean, the former Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children worker who produced the "evidence" that led to children being snatched from their beds in dawn raids, and who then prised from the children "confessions" of non-existent abuse.

After taking voluntary redundancy from the RSSPCC, she has now set up a freelance child sexual abuse consultancy in Edinburgh with Janette Chisholm, a former freelance social worker who also worked in Orkney.

McLean was criticized for failing to keep records of her interviews and for "leading" the children in every conceivable way. Janette Chisholm was quoted as saying: "There is nothing Liz did in Orkney that I wouldn't do tomorrow. It was all right and valid."

Social workers and the council in Orkney have meanwhile summarised the 363-page report thus: "We acted in good faith". The report's 194 criticisms appear to have been discounted as dozens of "experts" are wheeled out to repeat this "good faith" line.

Loud calls for the resignation of social work director Paul Lee and social work committee chairperson Mairhi Trickett fall on deaf ears. Both seem to think the snatch operation was right and proper. But while the pair remain in office, there is no hope of restoring confidence among the people of South Ronaldsay, where the snatched children live.

This was clear from a recent meeting attended by MP Jim Wallace, several councillors — including Trickett — and more than 100 residents. An impromptu vote on whether she should resign met with an instant and unanimous show of hands in favour. She said she did not intend to resign and would consider her position later, inferring that she will resign but only when people stop asking her to do so.

Nor is the Orkney Islands council helping matters. While it has appointed five councillors to carry out an inquiry into the scandal, it seems mightily put out that the families involved have decided to sue. It was, after all, only a trifling matter — having children snatched from their beds, removed from the islands for a month, questioned and medically examined in a manner which drew only 194 rebukes.

Nor is it likely OIC will press for resignations. The last time they pushed for resignations they got rid of children's panel reporter Katherine Kemp and brought in Gordon Sloane. He was described by parents as a tyrant and a bully, but criticised more moderately by Lord Clyde for his lack of patience and failure to listen. Few, if any, believe the fiasco would have happened if Kemp had stayed.

Grovel

● *I AM SO SORRY to hear that my friend Kelvin Mackenzie, only months after his gloating coverage of the "Squidgy" tape, is now having marital problems of his own: his formidable wife, Jackie, has ditched him after 25 years of marriage and is seeking a divorce.*

I fear it has all been a ghastly misunderstanding. A young and peroxide-blonde Sun hackette, Caroline Graham, was overheard at a party speaking of her warm admiration for her editor. This was reported back to Jackie, who — quite mistakenly — took it to mean that Kelvin was in an ongoing legover situation with the shapely hackette, and duly threw the old rascal out of their executive-style house in Kent.

Ms Graham has now been hastily despatched to the West Coast of America as the Sun's Los Angeles correspondent.

I AM equally sorry to hear that my other friend, David Montgomery, new chief executive of Mirror Group Newspapers, only weeks after his gloating coverage of the Camillagate saga, is the subject of equally distressing stories about his own past being circulated among staff at Holborn Circus.

Some years ago, when David was editing the notoriously left-wing *News of the Screws*, **he was conducting simultaneous affairs with two hackettes: Sharon Ring and Sharon Feinstein.**

One Saturday morning Rommel appeared in the office with a black eye while a noticeably hung-over Sharon Ring arrived late. When asked how Rommel had sustained his injury, Ring explained that Rommel had got carried away in a exotic discussion about Uganda and she had thrown him out of bed, causing his face to collide with the bedside table.

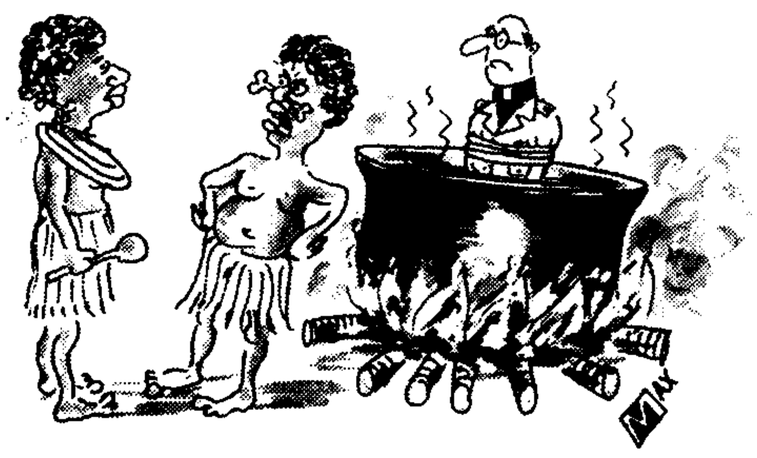
● *THAT Norman Lamont received taxpayers' money to evict the sex worker to whom he had generously rented out his house surprises me not a jot given the treasury's bizarre track record in helping its financially-challenged ministers.*

Back in 1981, for instance, the treasury's financial secretary Nigel Lawson was in dire straits. Having just been involved in an expensive divorce and needing to move house, poor Nigel was shocked to find that he was being charged stamp duty on one of the transactions.

The regulations in this particular case were somewhat complicated and Nigel felt, rightly as it turned out, that he was not obliged to pay.

Down in Worthing where stamp duty is assessed — and where officials felt the duty should indeed have been paid by Lawson — there was surprise when the tax men found themselves arguing the toss with at least two senior treasury officials who fiercely insisted in a long correspondence that Lawson should not pay.

The treasury officials were probably right; but down on the south coast they still can't understand how or why Lawson could call upon so much expert advice.



"Not pastor again!"

CONGRATULATIONS to my old friend Robert Maxwell, who even from beyond the grave is still able to pick a pocket or two.

His 29-room mansion Headington Hill Hall, which is now the residence of his widow Betty, has just been valued by the government for council-tax purposes. It has, amusingly enough, been placed in Band D, the category for houses that are worth between £68,000 and £88,000. Betty will thus pay council tax of £520.

BETTY MAXWELL should have little difficulty paying the bill, however, if the fine old publishing house of Macmillan, which has commissioned her to write a book of memoirs about her life with Cap'n Bob, meets her modest demand for a £75,000 fee.

No doubt Betty intends to donate the remainder of the fee to other Maxwell pensioners, less fortunate than herself.

While on the subject of the relatives of criminals benefiting from their relatives' crimes, I gather that young Kevin Maxwell, the country's biggest bankrupt, is also circulating a proposal for a book. Amusingly, his co-author is to be William Kay, the same man who did the Ernie Saunders book — another one written by a crook's son.

Why the authors of such books aren't immediately prosecuted by the attorney-general for contempt of court, I'll never know. After all, he pursued *Private Eye* all the way to the court of appeal when we commented on the Sonia Sutcliffe case before the trial.

I AM greatly impressed by the loyalty of United Nations secretary-general Boutros Boutros Ghali to fellow Egyptian Mahmoud Osman, his former *chef de cabinet* **who is wanted for an indecent assault committed within a day of his arrival in the US last year.**

Osman jumped bail back to Egypt and has not been seen since. But the inconsolable Boo Boo has apparently tried no fewer than three times to persuade the state department to readmit him.

The department is having some difficulty persuading the Pharaoh that even if it agreed to let Mr Osman in, the New York attorney-general, the chambermaid who was attacked and legions of vociferous women might try to recircumcise Mr Osman, without anaesthetic, as soon as he landed.

PITY Sir Rudolf Bing, the nonagenarian exile and former head of the Metropolitan Opera who remarried in his dotage.

Not only is he a victim of Alzheimer's disease, but he is now suffering from a debilitating condition contracted from his American lawyers.

Although it is fashionable to believe British lawyers to be the most expensive in the world, their transatlantic cousins would appear to win the cup for avarice.

Sir Rudolf's marriage was set aside in an action by public spirited attorneys who feared that his much younger wife was only after his $800,000 fortune. They have consistently fought in court to keep her from visiting her husband in his nursing home.

But Sir Rudolf may yet get his visit. For it seems that the lawyers, in their commendable zeal to defend him from alleged – and unlicensed – gold digging, have now done to his entire fortune what disease has done to his brain.

● WINNERS of the last issue's Bollard Design a Dress for Ascot competition will be announced at the end of the year. Competition still open.

Pip Pip!

Pseuds Corner

"At some point in the future," he answers, suddenly very serious, "I'm going to have to think about whether it's my responsibility as a musician to get into heavier drugs simply to find out more about music. I think a lot of the great musicians I admire have benefited from being in touch with heavy drugs — The Beatles, Hendrix, Coltrane, Charlie Parker — none of those cats would have had that expanse of consciousness in their music without drugs and to pretend otherwise is just moralistically stupid."

NIGEL KENNEDY
Guardian

Yes, there are bad trips but they are the ones on which people gain most insight. That's when you see what you really are. I think one man's bad trip is outweighed by acid's evolutionary effect on mankind as a whole.

LORRAINE (an LSD dealer)
Guardian

I don't worry about death. Most people do, so I'm told. No future in it. I'm deeply religious, not in a superstitious or orthodox way, but in the sense of linking. I link with Robin Hood, Merlin, Jesus — they're as important to me now as when I was a boy. There's an extraordinary circularity about life. Space is curved.

PETER O'TOOLE
Radio Times

This is one of the true specificities of television as a medium: that the viewer may take as many months or years as he likes to get to know a long-running series like Last of the Summer Wine. Such a series may creep up on him unawares; gradually, even stealthily, it may insinuate itself into his life in a way that would be quite impossible with any of the traditional arts. Coming to know Compo, Foggy and Clegg as I have, it's as though I have finally had the courage to address some familiar face in the street and been granted access to the mindset behind it.

GILBERT ADAIR
Sunday Times

The other anthem is a national one:
It's coming through a hole in the air
From those nights in Tiananmen Square
It's coming from the feel
That it ain't exactly real
Or it's real, but it ain't exactly there.
From the wars against disorder
From the sirens night and day
From the fires of the homeless
From the ashes of the gay
Democracy is coming... to the USA.

LEONARD COHEN
'Democracy' from *The Future*

CONTRIBUTORS: I. Bourne, E. Strobes, Louise Speller, Richard Smith, Anon.

£10 paid for entries

NOOKS and CORNERS

SO, FAREWELL then, the House of Windsor? Reactionary sentimentalists like myself wish to see significance in major conflagrations and recall that the old Palace of Westminster caught fire shortly after parliament was cleaned up under the reform act.

Does the fire at Windsor reflect the low fortunes of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha family, who in 1917 so vulgarly adopted the name of the eponymous castle in Berkshire? I myself favour a theological explanation.

Just as York Minster was struck by lightning soon after the consecration there of the heretical Bishop of Durham by the sinister Archbishop of York, so the Windsor fire broke out a week after the synod vote in favour of the ordination of women and the destruction of the Church of England. The queen, of course, as defender of the faith, is head of the church and the fire broke out in the Private Chapel (recently tastefully redecorated by our own Sir Hugh Casson).

If this is the case, then I cannot help feeling God has been a little unfair, taking it out on the queen and the British tourist industry. A more appropriate target for a thunderbolt would have been St Nicholas's church in Durham, for this was converted into a prototype luxurious coffee lounge by grinning George Carey before he was elevated to the episcopate.

Make no mistake: Archbishop Carey is a vandal of the first order, and by engineering the break-up of the Church of England he is ensuring the mutilation or redundancy of many of the finest churches in the country. A high proportion of the best churches, particularly Victorian ones, were built for Anglo-Catholic worship and, over the next few decades, will now either be closed or made suitable for slap-clappy coffee worship of the sort favoured by Mrs Thatcher's appointee as Archbishop of Canterbury.

But I digress. In fact the Windsor fire was merely another triumph for the British workman. Over the last few years, men with blowlamps have been responsible for the burning of Uppark and St Mary-at-Hill, loveliest of City churches. Now it seems likely that Windsor Castle must be added to a tally of which Reichsmarschall Goering might be envious. It certainly is curious that, although candles and coal are no longer burned in them, historic buildings now seem to "go on fire" all the more often, and usually when they are being "restored".

Of course Windsor must be recreated: what was destroyed were some of the finest Regency interiors in Britain. But who pays? The press has been ignorant about this. Windsor is not the queen's property. It belongs to the crown, that is, to the state, that is, to us (which is why it is monstrous that the ghastly Property Services Agency kept English Heritage out of the building); the queen's only private homes are Sandringham and Balmoral. And if Balmoral — God forbid! — went on fire, then I am not at all sure that Her Maj ought to enjoy a 100 percent repair grant: nobody else does.

Not only English Heritage is strapped for cash: Historical Scotland is so broke that no money is being given even to grade A-listed buildings before 1995 at the earliest. Yet our government, using bankruptcy as an excuse to finish off British Rail as well as leaving half the historic buildings in the country to rot, can instantly find lots of money for Windsor Castle as well as for yet more roads. Something is very wrong somewhere.

IT IS GOOD to know that this organ is fingered in the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire. My article on Vanduara, aka Paisley (Eye 805), has been noticed by Mr Owen Taylor, leader of Renfrew district council, who considers my criticisms unfair.

I mentioned the dereliction of Oakshaw, potentially the finest street in Paisley. "The council has spent a lot of time and money in the Oakshaw area," claims Councillor Taylor. "Look at the John Neilson building." Yes, do: after closures and dereliction it has been saved entirely by a private developer, Messrs Classical House, not by the cretinously philistine district council.

It is cheering to know my article has caused such offence. "I would say this has been written by a journalist who has never set foot in Paisley," reports the Paisley Daily Express. I can assure Coun Taylor that I know Paisley well: how else would I be aware of the shameful dereliction of the high street and Seedhill Road, for instance, or the shocking gap sites in Oakshaw, or the sheer awfulness of every new building the council's planners allow to disfigure what is left of a fine town?

Earlier this year, the Georgian Group visited Paisley and was deeply shocked that so potentially beautiful a place could be so disgracefully treated by the responsible authorities. Indeed, the group wrote to the district council to protest.

My picture should have illustrated my earlier article. It shows the magnificent grade A-listed Ferguslie No1 Spinning Mill, whose demolition began last month when in any sane community it would be creatively reused — as in Halifax, for instance. The destruction of this great mill is a scandal and a tragedy for Paisley.

Does Coun Taylor care? Presumably not. At the other end of town still stands the great Anchor Mills, once owned by the town's second thread dynasty, the forebears of our own pragmatic gun-running Sir Alan Clark. What will Coun Taylor and his fellow blinkered Thatcherites masquerading as Labour politicians do with these great structures that ought to be valuable assets for Paisley? I am watching.

'Piloti'

Bankers

THE BATTLE against the banks has taken a step forward with the creation of the aptly-named pressure group SAFE — "Struggle Against Financial Exploitation".

Founded by two owners of small businesses with the backing of Labour MP Frank Cook and Tory MP William Powell, SAFE is campaigning for a judicial review to be set up to look into the banks' use of secret "settlements".

These are documents which impose settlements on customers with whom a bank is in dispute, forcing customers to drop their cases in return for a continuation of banking facilities. The documents remain secret due to a clause which forbids either party to reveal their existence.

At this year's Barclays AGM, chairman Sir John Quinton denied the existence of such agreements until presented with physical proof by Mr Cook.

Mr Brian Jones, one of SAFE's founders, had himself received a settlement — the bank had offered to write off all but £35,000 of a £393,000 overdraft although it "in no way whatsoever" admitted liability, in exchange for an end to a campaign of vilification Mr Jones had been running against the bank.

Mr Jones, a property developer who had hitherto enjoyed an excellent relationship with his bank, maintained that, unbeknown to him, Barclays had approached a personal friend of his and sought — and accepted — a loan guarantee on one of Mr Jones's accounts when he was setting up his business. When, due to a personal disagreement, it was removed, Barclays declared out of the blue that the guarantees were void and so completely rearranged its lending arrangements. This made Mr Jones's business dealings more than difficult.

Following the Barclays AGM and the disclosure that secret settlement documents *do* exist, Mr Jones had a further meeting with a Mr Rutherford-Warren, head of the law section at Barclays, when it was admitted that not just one, but thousands of such agreements had been offered.

Barclays now maintains that these documents are standard practice and told the *Financial Times* on 11 November that it had offered to sign a clause that removed the confidentiality clause from Mr Jones's agreement. Twenty-four hours later the bank appeared to change its mind, Mr Jones and many others no doubt receiving letters reiterating the confidentiality clause.

So where are we? Firstly, Sir John Quinton denied the existence of the settlement agreement, then there was just the one, then thousands. Then there was the removal of the confidentiality clause, now it is reinstated. SAFE would appear to have rattled Barclays' cage not inconsiderably.

Sally Deedes

LIKE vultures circling a corpse, some insurance companies, including Legal & General, have come up with a clever ruse to find business while preying on the unemployed.

Commercial CV, a London-based firm that prepares professional career resumés for those who are redundant or trying to make a career move, was surprised to be pestered recently by insurance companies, and in particular by the Legal & General, to divulge its list of clients.

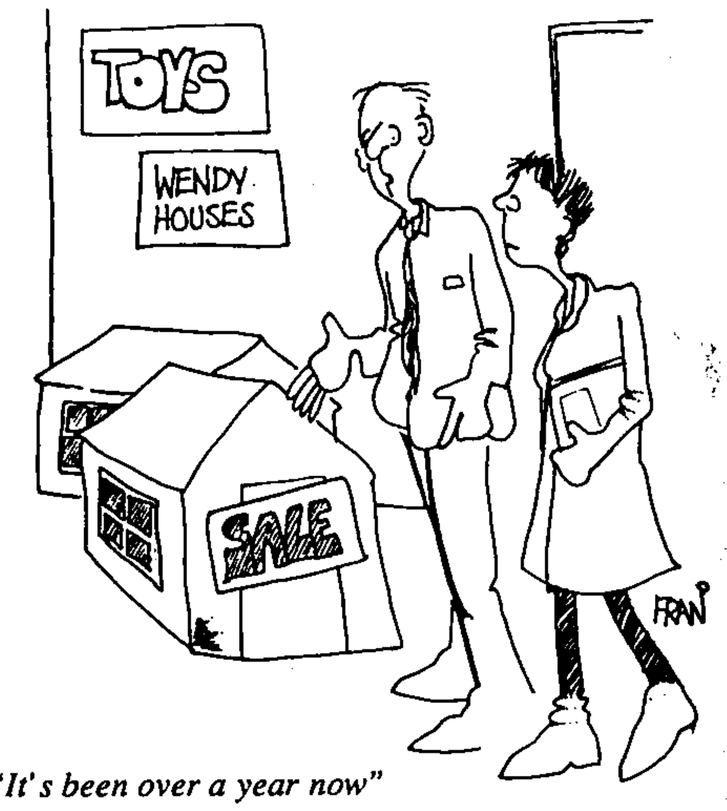
The reason given was that the insurers wanted to try to sell them financial services or to offer them "jobs" as consultants selling policies to their friends and family.

Susan Cuelho, owner and manager of Commercial CV, said: "The idea of contacting a CV preparation company is quite clever really. If a person is having a CV prepared it is fairly safe to assume that they are thinking of leaving or have just left a job."

Since many employees and ex-employees have contributed to company or private pension schemes, the insurance companies want to collar such hot prospects in the lucrative pensions market before they sign up or cash in with the competition.

The insurers' approach is less than subtle. As Susan Cuelho says, it ranges from "we would like to offer your clients jobs if they are being made redundant" to the more direct "there could be a £400 commission in it for you". And they apparently see nothing wrong in Ms Cuelho divulging confidential information. When she said such an idea was out of the question the reply was: "Oh, so you don't mind seeing people lose money on their company pension, then?"

But what's in it for the customer? Those who agree to sell policies and financial services to friends and relatives may soon find that once their list of contacts dries up they are unceremoniously dumped. Meanwhile the insurance company will go on collecting its new-found premiums for years to come.



"It's been over a year now"

TV

The Big Battalions (C4)
Catholics And Sex (C4)

THE RECENT story of *Spitting Image* and its Christ puppet is a perfect parable of British television's attitude to religion.

The rubber Son of God, after his first appearance, drew complaints from the usual pulpit chorus. Scandal, blasphemy, better get a lightning conduct on that building, remember York Minster, they cried. The producer dismissed them as lunatics.

It was at this point that a spokesman for the British Moslem community pointed out that Christ was also a significant figure in Islam. Scandal, blasphemy, better get a padlock on that building, remember Salman Rushdie, they cried. Within minutes, the latex Saviour was being melted down for condoms.

Here endeth the first lesson in British TV's treatment of religion in the 90s: piss on them all, but don't mess with the Moslems.

There is every indication that the lesson has been learned by *The Big Battalions*, Channel 4's big winter season drama. Hugh Stoddart's script for the six-hour epic attempts to be a modern *Barchester Chronicles*, although post-*Dallas* in style and post-Khomeini in scope. The bullishly ambitious Archdeacon of Birmingham — played by Brian Cox as an interesting combination of the Bishop of Durham, Terry Waite and Kenneth Clarke — loses the Brum bishopric to a wet Liberal rival, and establishes, as internal opposition, an evangelical "house church" movement.

Conveniently for the plot, and for international sales of the series, the archdeacon has an estranged wife doing Christian relief work in Ethiopia, and a daughter working on a kibbutz and in love with an Israeli soldier. This cunningly ecumenical plot permits Stoddart an overview of the world's major religions. But his scheme is not complete. There is also Yusuf, a young Palestinian, on his first pilgrimage to Mecca.

The treatment of Yusuf is interesting. The archdeacon is depicted as a ruthless politician in a dog collar, with a wandering cock thrown in. The African characters are presented as shifty terrorists. Jewish troops begin episode two by savagely beating a Palestinian. And

Yusuf? Why, Yusuf is a gentle, smiling youth, eyes alight with Mecca...

Indeed, the project is so craven before Islam's image that the Bishop of Birmingham is given an unlikely speech about the regrettable hostility of British Christians towards the great faith: "If our Moslem friends knew what some of my colleagues really think of them, there'd be a riot..." Well, yes, your grace. Next thing we know those fanatical British Christians will be sentencing English writers to death and establishing religious governments which amass nuclear weapons.

In a similar cowardice, *The Big Battalions* manages to ignore the holy war closest to its home base. Amend that first lesson: piss on them all, but don't mess with Moslems or the Irish. *Traffic* — the same team's last hit for Channel 4 — was set around the international drug trade, but it was also *about* the international drug trade, revealing its mechanics and moralities. By contrast *The Big Battalions* is not about religion but uses it as a sort of sexy thematic incense to waft around a conventional soap opera plot about sex and power. What it can't do — but which David Hare's CofE stage play *Racing Demon* did impressively manage — is to understand that, whatever the writer or viewer's own beliefs, the interesting thing about religious politicians and schemers, as opposed to the conventional kind, is that they are supposed to believe in God.

Revealing though these deletions are, they do not prevent *The Big Battalions* from being rattlingly addictive. But it is further evidence that, outside of the Sunday song slots, television's treatment of religion tends to be an extension of the joke about the missionary position.

Channel 4's other new God prog *Catholics And Sex* is as predictable as all the previous nudge-nudgers on the subject, despite modish visual tickles like shooting half the film in black and white and employing the poet John Hegley to interrupt the talking heads with verses. The first episode was about priestly celibacy. Question: Having had a stab at one faith, is Channel 4 now likely to commission documentaries dealing with the sex lives of rabbis and mullahs? Answer: Is the Pope a Buddhist?

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

WHILE IT continues to go largely unrecognised that one aspect of the BBC licence fee has been the money that has gone into training skilled technical personnel to serve the entire television industry, John Birt's "Producer Choice" initiative is threatening to cost the BBC more in post production.

Managers of Post Production Resources in network television have announced a 55 per cent reduction in their workforce to be achieved by next April. Because of Producer Choice, Post Production Resources will be zero-funded — ie it will get nothing from the licence fee, only from producers.

The redundancies are an attempt to cover the projected £6.5 million deficit the department will incur next year. As a new business, Post Production Resources will be expected to break even in its first year (against the trend of most new business ventures). At the same time it will not be allowed to compete openly for outside work unlike its competitors.

As a result of this, the stage 5 post production area, built as an extension of Television Centre at a cost of £60 million, with its state-of-the-art equipment, will be partially closed down. For example, the department will axe three telecine machines and two grading rooms (used to transfer film to videotape while preserving the high-quality appearance).

At present, the facility has been in operation for several months but most BBC producers are still ignorant of what it can do, owing to its inadequate marketing.

One absurd cost element that Post Production Resources will face is a rack-rent landlord in the shape of another zero-funded BBC department, Premises Operations, which seems to be charging a higher price per square foot than rival facility houses in Soho.

The management plans to get rid of 154 fully-trained technical staff when the department is barely able to cope with the demand from in-house production. The comparison with the government's strategy to run down the British coal industry because of the rigged electricity market is obvious to those involved at the Beeb.

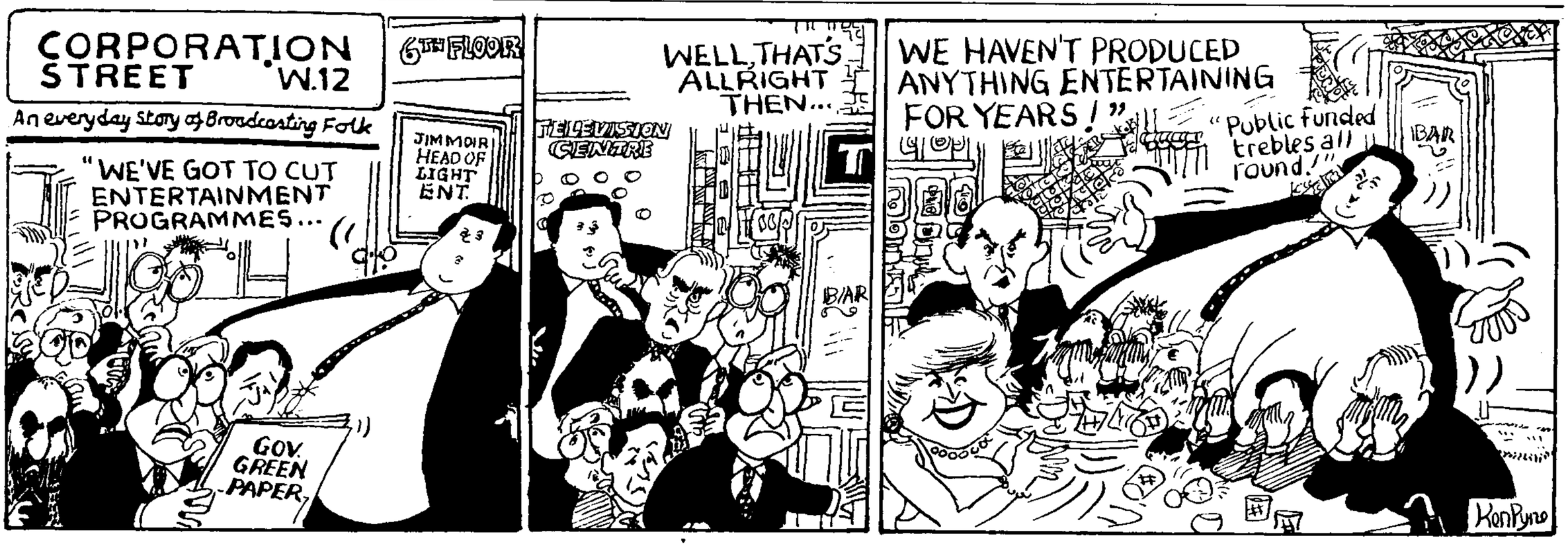
Meanwhile, staff have noticed the new parquet flooring in the main lifts at Television Centre — expensive inlaid wooden marquetry arranged in a fetching design.

WEST MIDLANDS police are furious over BBC Pebble Mill's new *Kinsey* series about a seedy solicitor anti-hero.

Knacker has gone all self-righteous over scenes showing Kinsey being harassed by police who try to trump up motoring charges and threaten to plant drugs on him in scenes obviously filmed in Birmingham.

West Midlands police, who have an arrant cheek getting self-righteous about anything, have in this case extra reason for sensitivity. For the Kinsey character is partly based on colourful Birmingham solicitor John Morgan, whom the police have been trying to damage for years, thanks mainly to his success in keeping innocent people out of jail.

It was Morgan who showed members of the *Kinsey* cast around the inner sanctums of Birmingham's courts and chambers and related plenty of anecdotal evidence to help the scriptwriters.



THE repeats-only satellite channel UK Gold is certainly generating revenue for advertising agencies and newspapers — but its promoters, BBC Enterprises and Thames, are unlikely to make a profit thanks to BSkyB.

Although BBC managers continue to cosy up to the men from Murdoch, there's little reciprocal affection. The only realistic prospect for UK Gold (and indeed other channels like MTV or CNN) to make money is if they can sell subscriptions, just like Sky Movies or companies using American cable systems.

Following the collapse of British Satellite Broadcasting, Murdoch essentially has a monopoly on the collection of subscriptions in Britain. This is thanks to his astute purchase of the copyright to the Videocrypt scrambling system, which is used by the decoders supplied with Amstrad dishes.

For a modest sum, Sky has allowed the BBC to use its encryption system for the boring Select services, late night scrambled business programmes which appear to be drawing few subscribers. But Sky has quoted such exorbitant fees for allowing UK Gold to use Videocrypt there's no profit to be made.

Without subscription fees UK Gold is likely to go the same way as its predecessor Super Channel, which also showed a mix of BBC and Thames shows, generated insufficient advertising revenue to pay its costs and had to be sold off to Richard Branson and an Italian broadcaster.

In short, either UK Gold agrees terms with the Murdoch monopoly or it goes under, even taking into account the pathetically low fees paid to Equity and Musicians Union members for the right to re-broadcast their work.

Normally this sort of potential for abuse of a monopoly would be investigated and exposed by the fearless Jonathan Miller of the *Sunday Times*. But he's probably been too busy following the likes of John Birt on their global travels. However, Murdoch's hold over scrambling systems and subscription collection further strengthens Sky's hand as negotiations continue for the BBC to rescue Sky News. More and more it looks as if Sky One will be axed, leaving the new BBC/Sky News, the Movie and Sports Channels (and any other operator willing to pay Murdoch's commission) available only for increasingly high monthly payments. This is called "greater choice".

"I'll have all three please, Cilla"

WHATEVER else it might be, the BBC is at least prescient.

For in the official corporation diary, the page for Wednesday 25 November carried a telling *apercu*. "We can never soon enough convince ourselves how easily we can be dispensed with," it said.

Wednesday 25 November was of course the day after publication of the government's green paper, and the day before publication of the BBC's response.

ANOTHER blow for the dynamic duo of Conservative Central Office and Saatchi and Saatchi. Fresh from being on the losing side in America, the dream ticket of the 1980s decided to intervene in the Irish general election.

While Saatchis launched a "Labour will tax your goolies" ad blitz, the Tories parachuted pubescent handler Stephen Hilton into the offices of the Gaulist-cum-Conservative Fianna Fail party.

This talented combination failed to assist Albert Reynolds, and led to entirely reasonable complaints from the local Labour party about blatant lies and distortion in the Saatchi ads.

HACKWATCH No 34: Christopher Monckton

THE FIRST Viscount Monckton of Brenchley (1891-1965), better known as Walter Monckton, had a distinguished public career: won an MC in the first world war, was Edward VIII's closest adviser through the abdication, served as minister in the 1951 Churchill government and ran the Midland bank.

His son Gilbert, the second viscount (b.1915) won an MC in the second world war and eventually rose to the rank of major-general. When Gilbert finally departs this life, the title (and seat in the Lords) will pass to his eldest son, the Hon Christopher Monckton (b.1952).

Seldom has there been more telling proof of the deficiencies of the hereditary principle. The Hon Christopher has had a varied career: editing the Catholic newspaper *The Universe*; working in Mrs Thatcher's "think tank" at Downing Street (1982-86); and, most recently, writing editorials in the London *Evening Standard*. Eventually he became too right-wing even for the *Standard*, and this summer was abruptly sacked. Since then he has been sighted only in papers such as the *Catholic Herald* and *Scotland on Sunday*. But has lost none of his loopiness. The main purpose of his journalism, as the extracts below suggest, is (a) to mention Christopher Monckton as often as possible; and (b) to mention his lovely wife.

3 July: Monckton's first column in the *Catholic Herald* starts as it means to go on — with a gratuitous reference to himself. "According to the *Yorkshire Post*, where ace cub reporter 'Scoop' Monckton cut his journalistic teeth, the Diocese of Leeds is £2 million in the red." The solution proposed by "Scoop" Monckton is simple: "If the bishop cannot recruit or keep enough bums to fill the seats, then he'll have to sell some church property."

7 August: Monckton is shocked by David Mellor's affair — "a grave sin", he reckons. But he bears no grudge against Mellor: "It is as much our Christian duty to hate the sin as it is to love the sinner." Talking of sin, Monckton moves on to the "mortal sin" of homosexuality. "At the Oxford Union recently, I opposed a motion which described homosexuality as a positive force in society... I described clinically, but in some detail, just a few of the things which homosexuals do to each other. I shall not repeat those things here: every one of them is wildly unnatural and repulsive in the extreme... At the end of the debate I offered an alternative: lifelong love and commitment of a happy marriage. My lovely wife stood up and we kissed."

14 August: In an article marking the feast of the Assumption Monckton celebrates "the pre-eminent role of women" in the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas men aspire merely to be priests, women have a "higher role" — to imitate our Blessed Lady. "Just over two years ago, and rather late in life, I got married. My lovely wife, Juliet, is the very model of a modern, Catholic lady: devoted to the Church, devoted to her undeserving but massively grateful husband, devoted to her relatives and his, always ready to stop and rescue a bird with a broken wing, and instantly loved by all who meet her. Everybody tells me that since I met Juliet I have been transformed from a curmudgeonly cuss into an almost-civilised human being... Archbishop Luigi Barbarito, the Papal Nuncio, came to dinner a few months after he had married us. He looked round our tiny house in Richmond and said that even the decor and the arrangement of the furniture showed how much love there was in the household... In little things and in great, my lovely wife is a delight to her husband and, as our Blessed Lady was, an outstanding example of love..."

6 September: Sensational news is splashed on the front page of *Scotland on Sunday*: Monckton and his wife have deserted their love-nest in London and relocated to an eight-acre estate in Perthshire, on the shore of Loch Rannoch. The newspaper points out that, two years ago, Monckton wrote a hysterical attack on the Scots in the *Evening Standard*, denouncing them as bone-idle, tight-fisted whingers and "subsidy junkies". He also advocated the immediate closure of Ravenscraig. Now his tone is rather less hostile. "One has to admit that Scotland is heavily subsidised and good luck to you," he tells the paper. "Scots are lovable people and they're no less lovable for that."

13 September: News of Monckton's arrival north of the border has provoked consternation on *Scotland on Sunday*'s letters page. "White settlers have been more damaging to Perthshire than the black plague ever was," one correspondent rages. "I hope... that Mr Monckton will be one of the first to depart. We Scots have good reason to be frightened of these people — if they have so fouled their own land as to make it uninhabitable what destruction are they going to do in Scotland?"

9 October: From his new Scottish HQ, Monckton sends a column to the *Catholic Herald*. Yet again, his subject is sins. According to the Penny Catechism, he notes, astrology is a sin. "Of course, one has to be sensible about this. There's no harm in looking up the prediction for your workmate's or soulmate's star-sign written by Madame Frou-Frou in the *Daily Blah*: 'The sun is in the cusp of Jupiter, so today is a bad day for reading Monckton's column'... This quackery is all a good laugh and harmless as long as you don't take a word of it seriously. Reading Monckton's column is always good for you, whatever Madame Frou-Frou may say." Growing ever more demented by the minute, Monckton notes that "manipulating public opinion" is also said to be a sin. "Judge not Monckton for the sin of 'manipulating public opinion', that ye be not judged," he warns. "Monckton, in his scribblings, certainly does his best to manipulate public opinion, but he would claim to do so honestly, fairly and (on the whole) beneficially."

1 November: Only weeks after arriving in Scotland and being mocked by *Scotland on Sunday*, Monckton surfaces — incredibly — as the paper's new columnist. More amazingly still, he seems already to be labouring under the delusion that he is Scottish. "We Scots," he writes, "cannot look to the government in England for solutions to the problems which the leaders of that government have created." The people whom he once called subsidy junkies are now, apparently, the salt of the earth. "Since my lovely wife Juliet and I had the honour to flit to Scotland at the beginning of September, we have been repeatedly struck by the proud sense of Scottish identity and nationhood in the heart and on the lips of every Scot we meet." Scotland, he believes, should declare its independence forthwith. Not content with that, he argues that Scotland could create its own currency without further delay. "There is nothing in the law to prevent any enterprising Scottish finance house from issuing small-denomination, unitised capital certificates." What's in it for him? At last all becomes clear: the new currency, he modestly proposes, should be known as "Monckton-pounds".

22 November: Monckton's second column for *Scotland on Sunday*. By now, having spent all of two months in the country, he has picked up the lingo: "The Scottish Office's consultation paper [on water privatisation] is a *wee, cowering, timorous beastie*... Why do ministers come over all coy and *peely-wally* when they think about water privatisation in Scotland? Because they suspect, rightly, that the Scots are *agin it*." [Our italics.]

Hoots, mon! Can it be long before the Hon Christopher Monckton, resplendent in kilt, is signed up to present the White Heather Club?

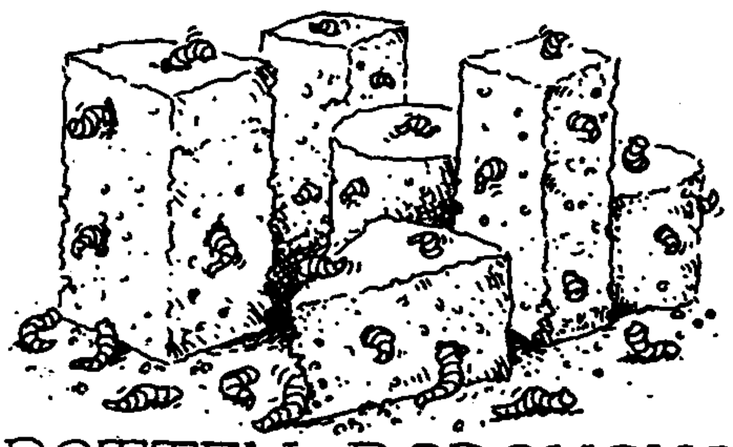
LUVVIES

Playing opposite my own spouse has rewards but is fraught with difficulties. I understand him so well that when I see a cloud pass across his face I know I've got it wrong. He's very tough and critical, ruthless to get to the truth of a scene and like a dog with a bone until he does. He knows I can take it, and doesn't need to tread gently with me.

SINEAD CUSACK (on Jeremy Irons)
Radio Times

Submitted by Francis Harvey.

An occasional column featuring gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries printed.



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

VALE OF WHITE HORSE

AT LEAST one area of the country is awash with dosh: Vale of White Horse, Britain's most absurdly-named council, recently splashed out a five-figure sum hiring consultants to design a new corporate logo.

The previous design — of a white horse on a black background — had failed to keep up with the "new competitive environment", according to the ruling Tory group. (Who exactly the council competes with is unclear; after all, poll taxpayers can hardly take their custom elsewhere.)

The fee for the new logo is part of a costly spree that aims to convince locals that the local shire county council should be abolished, with services transferred to the local authority stable (*geddit?*).

Happily the £10,000 logo money was well spent. Out goes the dull old design of a white horse on a black background — and in comes an exciting new logo of a, er, white horse on a black background.

KIRKCALDY

LITTLE-KNOWN Kirkcaldy district council, north of Edinburgh, is still awaiting the return of £4,000 it lent its erstwhile leaderene, Karen Carrick, until recently the youngest council boss in the galaxy.

Now aged 33, the former *Wunderkind* was sacked from the Labour group in July after inquiries showed she had spuriously claimed to have degrees in law and medicine from three Scottish universities she had attended. Carrick tried to resign but was turned down and ousted. She now sits as a Scottish Labour member, whatever that is.

It was not a good summer for Carrick. Two weeks before her sacking, a Kirkcaldy court ordered her to pay £362 she owed to a carpet company. While leader she took out £3,300 worth of "special responsibility allowance" in advance of running up the expenses, as well as a £400 advance on a conference she was set to attend in Tory-ridden England.

Letters asking for the dosh were sent back having been ignored, so councillors have now engaged Messrs McSue, Grabbit and Runne, Laddie, Runne. This put a cold Fife wind up Carrick, who wrote back to the council hoping the issue could be "settled privately" and seeking an assurance that her correspondence would not be divulged. She forgot to seek similar clarification from Lord Gnome.

BENT

ONLY in Bent, Britain's barmiest borough, could a Tory councillor pass himself off as a well-known local journalist and go round town hall offices asking staff if they are enjoying their jobs.

Bill Duffin, hitherto a little-known member of Bent's scandal-ridden ruling Conservative group, has been staging a one-man unofficial tour of Bent's housing benefit department claiming to be *Evening Standard* reporter John Oakes.

Duffer is obsessed with his administration's new competence tests for staff and has been confounding employees with his intricate line of questioning: "Hello... Who are you?... Do you enjoy working here?" and so on. No competence tests have yet been formulated for councillors.

Duffer has also turned his attention to the local registry office which has moved from Neasden to the town hall. But Bent-watchers claim his interest there is a cover to spy on "illegal" immigrants allegedly faking marriage to take up UK residence. Claiming to be John Oakes he even stopped one distraught bride with a few well-chosen questions.

Since Duffin and Oakes are known to most locals merely by name, the impersonation wasn't immediately rumbled. But perhaps Duffer should have been more circumspect in his choice of identity. John Oakes, the reporter he claims to be, has only one leg and usually carries a shooting stick.

MURKEYSIDE

WHILE minions will get a paltry 1.5 percent pay increase next year if they're lucky, high-ups in councils such as Liverpool will fare much better. Chief executive Peter Bounds is asking city councillors to approve a further "restructuring" of top jobs which, *natch*, will mean big pay increases.

Appointments to top-tier "heads of service" posts will earn a maximum salary of £48,225 under the new structure, compared with £37,431 for similar jobs two years ago — a 30 percent rise. Cash-strapped Liverpool council is being asked to pay out more than £2 million in salaries for its top 50 officers in the next financial year at a time when it faces a projected overspend of between £11 and £17 million.

But as council officers have much of the administrative burden taken from them by government, local taxpayers ask why they should pay such people more for doing less. High salaries might be justified if senior personnel gave good value for money; but recent evidence suggests the opposite.

City engineer Bob Bertram is due before a council disciplinary committee on a charge of gross misconduct to explain how he handled a cable TV contract which made a £1 million loss instead of the £1 million profit expected. (The councillor who heads the direct services committee, Frank Anderson, has already given Inspector Knacker a "voluntary confession": cable TV was installed free of charge for him and his girlfriend).

But council officers should have nothing to fear about making losses. Director of maintenance and building works Sid Reilly presided over a £2.5 million loss — and still got early retirement with a golden handshake (£60,000 lump sum and more than £20,000 a year in pension.)

HACKNEY

HACKNEY council's nauseating back-slapping PR document *Inside Hackney's Competitive Services* will go down like a cup of cold sick on at least one of the borough's estates.

The glossy 16-pager highlights the "achievements" of the council's direct labour organisation. Those achievements have been conspicuously absent on the Nightingale Estate where tenants of Rogate House have been waiting more than two years for the re-opening of one of the block's lifts, which was destroyed by fire.

Rogate is home to many elderly tenants whose health has doubtless benefited from the exercise they now get climbing up six flights of stairs. It was not until a resident's suicide prompted her neighbours to submit a petition this summer that the council even bothered to inform them of the "progress" (*sic*) of repairs.

A letter from the directorate of housing promised work would be "completed before Christmas". It has yet to start...

DOWN ON THE FARM

with 'Old Muckspreader'

MORE evidence emerges that "reform" of the common agricultural policy (CAP) is costing British taxpayers dear.

Far from cutting government spending on farming, the chancellor's autumn statement puts it up by £670 million next year, £790 million the year after and £960 million the year after that.

No wonder there's so much chortling in the shires. With the recent devaluation of the green pound, the happy yeomen are currently pocketing higher prices than they've seen for years.

Subsidy minister John Gummer insists the increased budgetary cost will be more than offset by the reduced burden on consumers. But so far his assurance has brought little rejoicing in the high street. Everyone wonders just how much more CAP reform we can afford.

THE EVER convoluted system for paying subsidies to farmers is creating undreamt of opportunities for crooks and fraudsters.

Whether a field is stocked with cattle or sheep, planted with cereals or infested with thistles, there are special cash hand-outs to match. Not surprisingly, some of these subsidised animals and crops appear mobile, changing position dramatically during the hours of darkness.

An army of bureaucrats at the Ministry of Over-Production is now labouring on a revolutionary scheme to end the multi-cropping of subsidies. Every field in Europe is to be given an identification symbol — a large tattoo visible to spy-in-the-sky satellites — and cattle and sheep are to be tagged with radio transmitters emitting their own individual call signs.

Government plant breeders, meanwhile, have been ordered to develop thistles of varying colours. These will be used to keep track of fields on which set-aside payments have been made. A key element of the new anti-fraud system has so far eluded the boffins — how to label hedges to stop them being moved about the country.

"It is in everybody's interest to ensure that this measure is successful," says Gummer.

MAD COW disease is having a dotty effect on cattle prices. As farmers complain once more of hard times, the prices they're prepared to pay for dairy cattle have reached record levels.

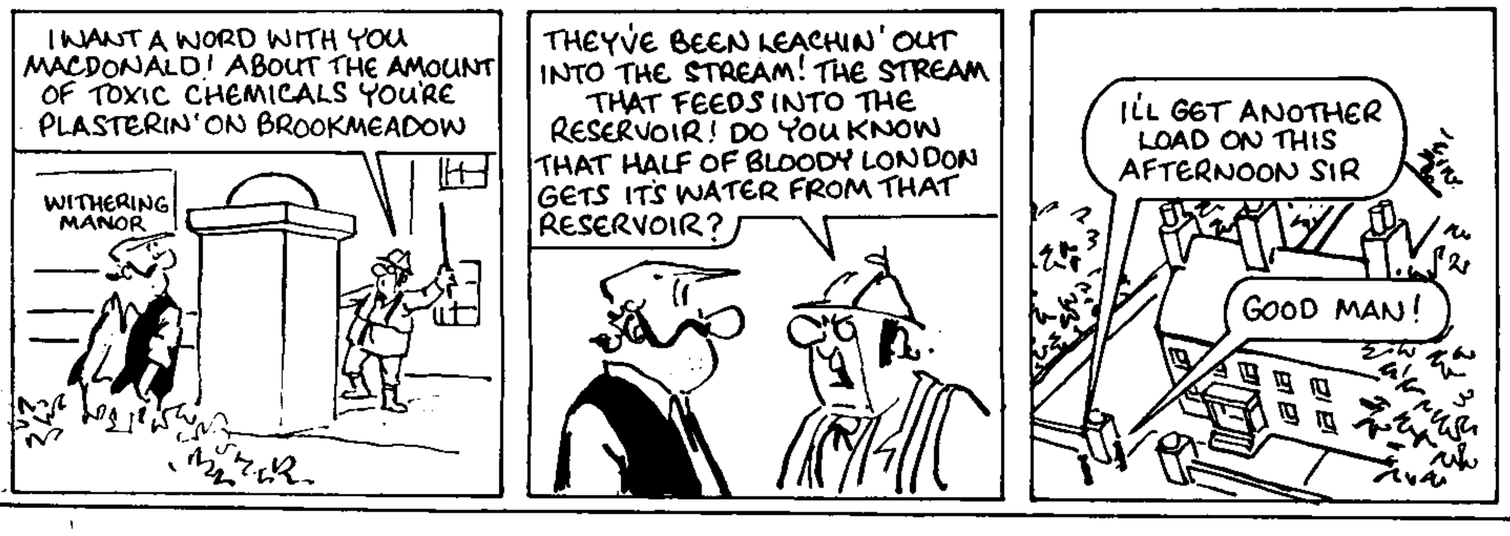
The auctioneers blame a shortage of cows. Although BSE no longer makes the tabloid headlines, the disease is currently leading to the slaughter of 700 Daisys and Buttercups a week. Their owners are handsomely compensated at market prices, so they have no hesitation in bidding up silly figures for replacements — they know they'll get it back in compensation on the next mad cow victim.

BSE compensation from the taxpayer thus perpetuates price escalation for cattle. As a system for diverting resources to farmers it's almost as good as the CAP.

Gummer and his cohorts clearly believe the mad cow disease tide has turned. Public expenditure figures show the provision for BSE compensation has been set to fall from £23 million to just £5 million over the next three years. But far from declining, the disease is increasing. Confirmed cases are running at more than 700 a week compared with 600 a week earlier this year. The government clearly believes we are seeing the peak. Let's hope it is a better predictor of disease patterns than it is of economic cycles.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


I WANT A WORD WITH YOU MACDONALD! ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF TOXIC CHEMICALS YOU'RE PLASTERIN' ON BROOKMEADOW
WITHERING MANOR
THEY'VE BEEN LEACHIN' OUT INTO THE STREAM! THE STREAM THAT FEEDS INTO THE RESERVOIR! DO YOU KNOW THAT HALF OF BLOODY LONDON GETS ITS WATER FROM THAT RESERVOIR?
I'LL GET ANOTHER LOAD ON THIS AFTERNOON SIR
GOOD MAN!

UNPRECEDENTED scandal has besmirched the reputation of Manchester university following the strange case of the university's new vice-chancellor, Professor Martin Harris, allegedly too suicidal to answer a charge of kerb-crawling.

Harris, who was only appointed to the plum post in August, was recently due to appear before Manchester magistrates after being stopped by police in the city's notorious red-light district, Whalley Range.

Yet only days before he was due in court the crown prosecution service (CPS) announced that it had dropped the case "in the public interest". The official explanation held for about two minutes, before the clerk of court absentmindedly revealed the real reason the case had been dropped: Harris might commit suicide if charged.

Thoroughly humiliated, Harris later came clean to Manchester university's senate governing body. He told them how a woman had got into his car while he was studying the *A-Z* after losing his way in *Whalley Range*. He then gave her £20 when she demanded money "for wasting her time". What Harris didn't add was that no sooner had the woman got into his car than Knacker arrived, asking the woman: "Do you know this one?" to which she cooed "Ooh, he's a regular." Later, at the nick, the woman admitted she'd made a mistake.

Harris's grasp of local geography must be failing him, for he is no stranger to Manchester. He lectured at Salford university for 12 years and lived in Didsbury. Whalley Range is half way between the two and unavoidable for commuters.

The professor is also having more mundane domestic problems. His job comes with luxurious accommodation. Until recently this was The Firs, once the home of legendary *Manchester Guardian* editor C.P. Scott. The university has now passed this up in favour of a plainer pad, the White House, set in the sumptuous grounds of a rambling mansion, Broomcroft Hall, in south Manchester.

On arriving at the estate to be shown his quarters Harris fell in love with the massive Broomcroft Hall and thanked his colleagues' generosity. None of the cowardly, cuts-conscious university officers had the guts to tell him Broomcroft Hall was for official functions and that the much smaller White House was for him. So the VC is now at Broomcroft Hall and the White House, with £150,000 of recent refurbishments, stands idle.

HUNT NEWS

NO SOONER had the fox-hunting season opened than the Bicester and Whaddon Chase managed to distinguish itself with a brutal attack on a party of hunt saboteurs.

On 7 November the hunt was accompanied by several gentleman of the nightclub bouncer variety, employed by a private security firm. The North Bucks hunt saboteurs who turned up were manhandled off public footpaths and generally intimidated by these burly thugs.

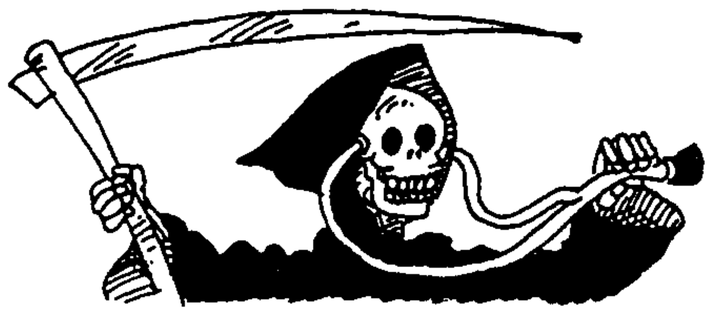
A week later the saboteurs appeared in greater force, about 40 in all, and broke up into three smaller groups, each roughly a dozen strong. Joining the hunt, they sprayed scent dullers and issued hunting voice commands to confuse the hounds. Very annoying for the folks in red, of course; but hardly a justification for what ensued.

The huntsman, in charge of the hounds and carrying a hunting horn, arrived (at the Bicester and Whaddon, the huntsman is changing on a weekly basis at present) and shouted at Oxford hunt saboteur Stefan Davies: "You're going to fucking get it this time." He then rode his horse at Davies and tried to crop him on the head, injuring him on the arm and the horse knocking him into a ditch.

The second saboteur, Miles Cooper, was attacked by a black-coated rider who followed the same pattern — riding at him and trying to crop him — but when that proved insufficient the rider dismounted and used the handle of his crop to beat Cooper about the head, landing a nasty blow to his temple.

The assailant then began to punch and kick Cooper, who was by now down on the ground. Watched by 50-odd members of the hunt, he stomped on Cooper's head until a couple of female hunt members shouted out: "That's enough. Leave him now." Cooper was left semi-conscious in a ditch and Stefan Davies was knocked back into the ditch by a horse before the hunt rode off.

'Reynard'



DOING THE ROUNDS

AT Newcastle's Royal Victoria Hospital, the nationwide absence of training and supervision of junior doctors has been blamed for the death of a 71-year-old man after a tired houseman injected him with potassium instead of saline.

Although the department of health is claiming widespread success in reducing doctors' hours, most of its statistics are taken from inaccurate pay-rolls which record only the hours that are remunerated. In the **South Western region**, the DoH claims only three jobs exceed 83 hours a week. A recent questionnaire revealed at least 124 that do...

● AT **London's St Bartholomew's NHS "trust"** the cardiac directorate, which pioneers work on heart rhythms, is one of just two that generate a profit. Strange, then, that the number of coronary artery bypass grafts and cardiac catheterizations per month has been halved and the angiography lists cut by two-thirds.

With waiting time for treatment already six months, the coronary care unit is always full and demand is increasing. Why managers should want to decimate such a profitable and well-respected department is unclear, though staff feel they have accepted the Tomlinson axe without putting up a fight.

● DESPITE having the country's larest financial deficit (£19 million), **UCH-Middlesex shadow trust** has appointed two more general managers (Ms Knowles and Dr Secker-Walker) to support the existing pair (Miss Wakefield and Mrs Griffiths) and their myriad deputies and business managers. Although Middlesex is due to close, chief executive Charles Marshall still plans to appoint clinical directors for every speciality. Evidently it takes more managers to close a hospital than to run one.

The management overkill comes two months after the sacking of 150 nurses, porters, receptionists and domestics, and the closure of 125 beds. The bed shortage at UCH-M is now acute.

● THE otherwise squalid **Brighton General Hospital** boasts a particularly pleasant facade overlooking the sea. So pleasant, indeed, that the management decided to turf out staff and patients and convert it into an admin block. This was done at great haste and expense in preparation for visiting dignitaries from the Tory conference in October. Such was the profligacy that haematologists, down to their last two white-cell filters, were told there was no money left in the drug budget to buy more. Such filters are used for leukaemia patients undergoing blood transfusions and their absence may cause serious complications later on.

● DOWN the road at the **Royal Sussex County Hospital** an orthopaedic ward was closed over the summer and immobile elderly patients diverted 20 miles to the **Princess Royal** at **Hayward's Heath** and to the inaccessible **Southlands** hospital beyond **Hove** for operations.

● **BATH'S Royal United Hospital** faces further delay in opening its new surgical block. Although at last finished, the cash-strapped trust has decided to pay £60,000 to a management consultancy firm for a feasibility study prior to patient transfer. Orthopaedic consultants have been told to abandon clinical judgement and only replace the hips of patients from fund-holding GPs. Queue-jumping has also surfaced at **Norfolk and Norwich** hospital and **West Norwich** hospital which, facing a £700,000 overspend, have cancelled all routine operations for a month... fundholders' patients excepted.

● TWO-TIER general practice continues to be very unpopular with young doctors. Prior to the new contract, the GP training scheme in **Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey**, attracted more than 200 applicants for two posts. This year, only three applications were received and the scheme has been shelved. In **Gloucester, Avon, Somerset, Lincolnshire, Newcastle** and **Leicester**, at least a quarter of GP trainee posts are unfilled.

The situation is so desperate that the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), itself facing a membership crisis, is mounting its own glossy recruitment drive to promote the traditional values of general practice.

● **OXFORD'S Radcliffe Infirmary** has a severe parking problem with staff often waiting an hour to find a space in the ludicrously oversubscribed permit park. The overstretched infirmary may soon be forced to take on casualty and maternity patients from **Banbury's Horton** hospital which faces departmental closures despite the excellent and often life-saving service it gives to its catchment population (40,000 and rising). Oxfordshire DHA representative Dr Dick Mayon-White, who announced the cuts without public consultation, claims maternity services are less in demand due to an upsurge in home births.

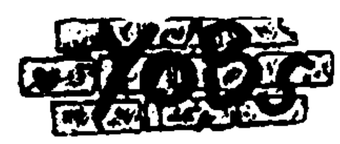
● **AT SALFORD Royal Infirmary** junior doctors have been forced to live in a condemned building for the last six months. Although both fire and environmental health officers had declared the building unsafe, hospital manager Bill Sang has delayed refurbishment as the hospital is due to close in January 1993.

● **WRIGHTINGTON** hospital near **Wigan** is taking on five new managers (£30,000 each, plus Cavalier) while simultaneously cutting porters' wages by 20p an hour, refusing to pay for sick leave and overtime, reducing holidays to 13 days a year and removing £50,000 from the nursing budget.

● **SCUNTHORPE'S** health bosses have been massaging their waiting lists for cataract surgery to make them look smaller. Patients do not appear on the lists until their sight deteriorates to just 25 percent. They then face an 18-month wait for surgery.

● MD wishes to correct inaccuracies in Doing the Rounds, *Eye* 806, concerning Resource Management Services of Bristol. RMS has never been refused credit in connection with its transactions with South West Regional Health Authority, nor did any SWRHA employee participate (silently or otherwise) in the decision by the NHS Supplies Authority to award its national payroll administration contract to RMS.

M.D.



HUSBAND

I want a suit
Well we have suits for every occasion
GENTS OUTFITTER
Well I want one for appearing in court on a GBH charge
er.. Well lets see now

Letters

O no

Sir,

Given John Major's strange compulsion to publish all school exam results, I take it for granted that the PM will soon be revealing how many O levels he managed to pass/fail.

Yours faithfully,
GRANT MILLER,

Tayside.

Risky business

Sir,

I am writing in connection with the "Mirrorwatch" column in the 6 November issue of PRIVATE EYE.

You mentioned that "The British Airways security chief... is a former captain in military intelligence who came to the company via Control Risks, the high powered insurance company run by former Northern Ireland military intelligence colonel, Peter Goss".

I would just like to set the record straight:

One, the British Airways security chief was not a former Control Risks member, nor was he introduced by us.

Two, Control Risks is not a high powered insurance company — it is a specialist management consultancy.

Three, Peter Goss does not run Control Risks and in any event, has now retired from full-time employment with the Company.

Apart from these points, I thoroughly enjoyed reading the Mirrorwatch column and would like to commend PRIVATE EYE *on its investigative reporting.*

Yours sincerely,
D.N.V. CHURTON,

Managing Director, Control Risks Group Ltd, London SW1.

Flushed out

Sir,

In your report "Arming Iraq" (807) you asked for the identity of Armitage to be revealed.

Could it possibly be Armitage Shanks, purveyor of toilet bowls, down which our government is hopefully heading?

Yours faithfully,
MARK TIMLETT,

Sevenoaks, Kent.

Pearly queens

Sir,

I believe I am the person described as "Hempel's PR" in the Grovel column of the latest issue of PRIVATE EYE *and I feel I should, in fairness to Jane Procter, correct any impression that there was some mystery relating to "missing" pearls that turned up in her possession.*

Quite simply, a number of us including Jane were involved in a photographic shoot on the beach one afternoon, at the end of which we all gathered the many items of clothing, accessories and jewellery that had been used and took them to our various rooms for safekeeping.

I am not suggesting that you print a correction to what I am sure was intended as a light-hearted piece but, to ensure that this does not become one of those stories that is automatically repeated, I thought it only fair to Jane Procter to drop you a note that you could put in your files with the article.

Yours faithfully,
SARA GRAHAM,

PA to Lady Weinberg, Anouska Hempel Ltd, London SW3.

"Honey, he's home!"

Wrong number

Sir,

Unfortunately the article you published on 6 November concerning the 999 service was substantially incorrect in almost all its aspects. I am writing to set the record straight.

The initiative which has evidently prompted your article is being driven by OFTEL, not BT. OFTEL have appointed professional consultants to investigate the feasibility of withdrawing the 999 handling responsibility from all public telecommunications operators (not just BT) and establishing a separate Call Handling Agency.

The number, size and location of 999 handling sites which the Call Handling Agency may use is entirely OFTEL's concern and no doubt will be established in a professional way so as to ensure that 999 calls are dealt with speedily and effectively.

We are proud of the technical capabilities of our network but, clever as we are, we have not managed to invent a system that knows what emergency authority our customers need or what the nature of the problem is "at a glance" as you suggest. We are expert at telephony, not telepathy. When a 999 call comes in to us, in the majority of cases, we will know the calling customer's number and our systems will automatically present the relevant Emergency Authority numbers to the operator to speed the connection of the call to the Fire, Police or Ambulance Services.

For many years we have maintained the 999 service to a high standard dealing with millions of calls every year. The reliability and speed of our service has been second to none. Our operators have always taken a justifiable pride in the 999 service. Until such time as BT lose the 999 service, we will continue to treat it as highest priority in our network and our operating centres.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID WARD,

Head of Operations Support, BT, Headingley, Leeds.

Open verdict

Sir,

Your report in Sally Deedes (807) gives the misleading impression that a link has been established between the use of particular kinds of mattress and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

This personal theory of Mr Richardson's has recently been described as "unsubstantiated" by the widely respected Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths. Furthermore, the advice to cover a mattress with a piece of polythene is not consistent with recommendations from other sources that there should be good ventilation around the child.

In any case, even if the connection is made, I hope readers have not come away with the belief that the "right" sort of mattress will prevent cot death; I know from personal experience that this is not the case.

I would of course welcome further research in this direction, but it must be emphasised that the effects of mattresses can be at most one of a number of factors that contribute to SIDS, and should not be presented as the chief cause.

Yours faithfully,
STEVEN SCHNEIDER,

Botley, Oxford

Border dispute

Sir,

I would like to list the principal inaccuracies in the two brief stories about Border Television and myself in your last issue.

1 *You wrote that "Border's Managing Director Jim Graham has had a £60,000 pay rise"; not true:*

2 *That "Company Secretary Peter Brownlow has seen his salary leap to £90,000 a year"; not true:*

3 *That as Chairman I receive a "miserly £1,000"; not true:*

4 *That I proposed that I should be made "an Executive Chairman and paid a proper salary"; not true: and was rebuffed by the Board; not true:*

5 *That I sold some pictures of myself and my wife to* HELLO! *Magazine for "a quick killing of £10,000"; not true: I have neither sought nor received any money or indeed any pictures from* HELLO! *Magazine.*

I hope that all this duff information is uncharacteristic or I would begin to worry about you.

Yours faithfully,
MELVYN BRAGG,

Border Television plc.

Best-iary

Sir,

I wonder whether you would be interested in running a competition similar to the EVENING STANDARD *(16 Nov) in which your old friend Peter McLie is exhorting readers to send in their suggestions for an A-Z Best of British feature.*

I submitted the following to them in reply, and await publication with interest. Abysmal, Banal, Condescending Drivel; Egocentric, Flatulent, Gibberish; High-minded; Ill-informed; Jingoistic; Keckworthy; Lamentable; Moronic; Nonsensical; Ostentatious; Patronising; Querulous; Reprehensible; Sycophantic; Trite; Uninspiring; Vainglorious; Wet; Xenophobic (congratulations Peter — you got that one right!). Obviously written by a Yobbish Zoril.*

Yours alphabetically,
MISS ALISON JONES,

London N10.

**Zoril: a carnivorous African quadruped allied to skunk and weasel. How apt.*

Non Parlo

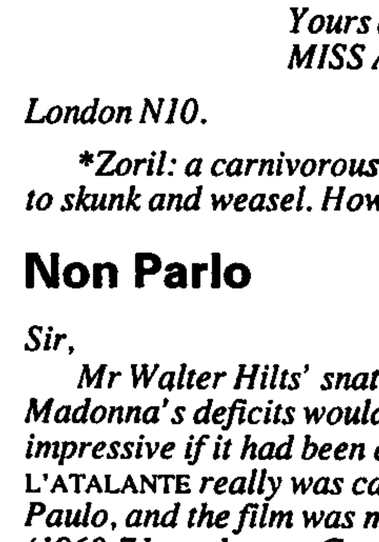
Sir,

Mr Walter Hilts' snatch of information about Madonna's deficits would have been more impressive if it had been accurate. The actress in L'ATALANTE *really was called Dita Parlo, not Dita Paulo, and the film was made in 1934. Miss Parlo (1960-71, real name Gerthe Kornstadt) made her string of movies in the thirties, not the twenties.*

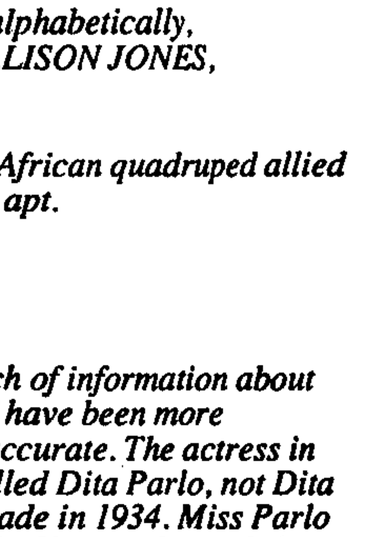
Yours faithfully,
FRANK LOXLEY,

Bristol.

Lookalike



Conman



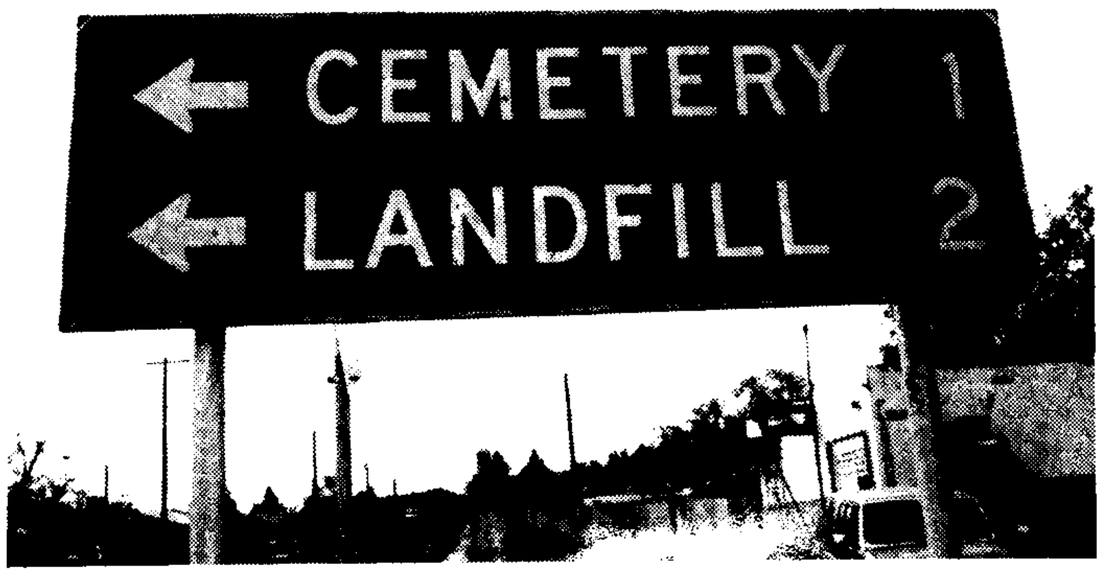
Conman

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the odd similarity between tabloid conman Rocky Ryan and, er, tabloid conman Robert Maxwell? Are they perhaps one and the same? Does Cap'n Bob live on to con another day? I think we should be told.

SANDY ROBERTSON,

West London.



I-SPY

Fort Hood, Texas

Submitted by D.J. Lonsdale. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Word perfect

Sir,

I note from your last issue that the "gormless" Piers Morgan is shocked by your recent reference to him as "talented".

Perhaps you might consider using "ironically challenged" as more appropriate in future?

Yours faithfully,
SERGEI SUBOTSKY,

London SE24.

Deiner's card

Sir,

Your article "Dein Machine" (6 November) was clearly not firing on all cylinders as it contained a duff mixture of fuel.

I do not propose to rise to the Ken "Bait" comments regarding the advertising deal which was struck quite legitimately with eight clubs but to stand by our principles of reducing the size of the League and the introduction of strict criteria, in the best interests of players and fans alike and particularly for the benefit of the England Team.

At a recent meeting of 14 chairmen of the Premier League it was expressly agreed that no one should speak to the media. Nevertheless three of their number inevitably broke ranks to a journalist who didn't take the trouble to seek the whole of the facts and they directed hostile comments at me including withdrawing hospitality. However I am pleased to report that last Monday I was graciously entertained by two of them at Selhurst Park (landlord and tenant) — there being no bad feeling and I suffered no ill-effects from the meal!

The only dealings I have had with Cabra Estates was in 1990 when I was an expert witness in a public inquiry concerning the Craven Cottage ground where I (and indeed the Fulham FC directors) considered it made good sense for them to accept the £13 million from Cabra to relocate the ground. Following last week's demise of Messrs Cabra, I guess that offer is now off the table!

Regarding libel actions, I can hardly have a "Maxwell like reputation" as so far I have only had one such action during all my years in football. Furthermore my legal advisors have never acted for Maxwell and now it's too late!

We are content with the progress of our Bond Scheme and we believe that when our redevelopment work is completed in August 1993 we will have a ground which will take some beating — I hope to say the same for the team!

Yours faithfully,
DAVID B. DEIN

Arsenal Stadium, London N5.

Lamont lament

Sir,

Thought you might find the following of interest:

"Oh, my God!" he groaned. "You're not going to do a Lamont on us, are you, Grant?"

Years ago Grant had gone into the farthest Highlands after a man and had brought him back; brought him back sewn up in a case so fault-proof that only the sentence remained to be said; and had handed him over with the remark that on the whole he thought they had got the wrong man. (They had.) The Yard had never forgotten it, and any wild opinion in contradiction to the evidence was still known as "doing a Lamont".

It is from Josephine Tey's novel TO LOVE AND BE WISE, *first published in 1952!*

Yours,
RICHARD TURNER,

Reading.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"So you went to the hospital about your alcoholism problem. That must have taken a lot of bottle!"
JUDY FINNEGAN, ITV
(Cliff Moore)

"Open up that there Pandora's Box and there's no telling what Trojan Horses might come out of it."
PETER BROOKE MP
(Lorrae McLeod)

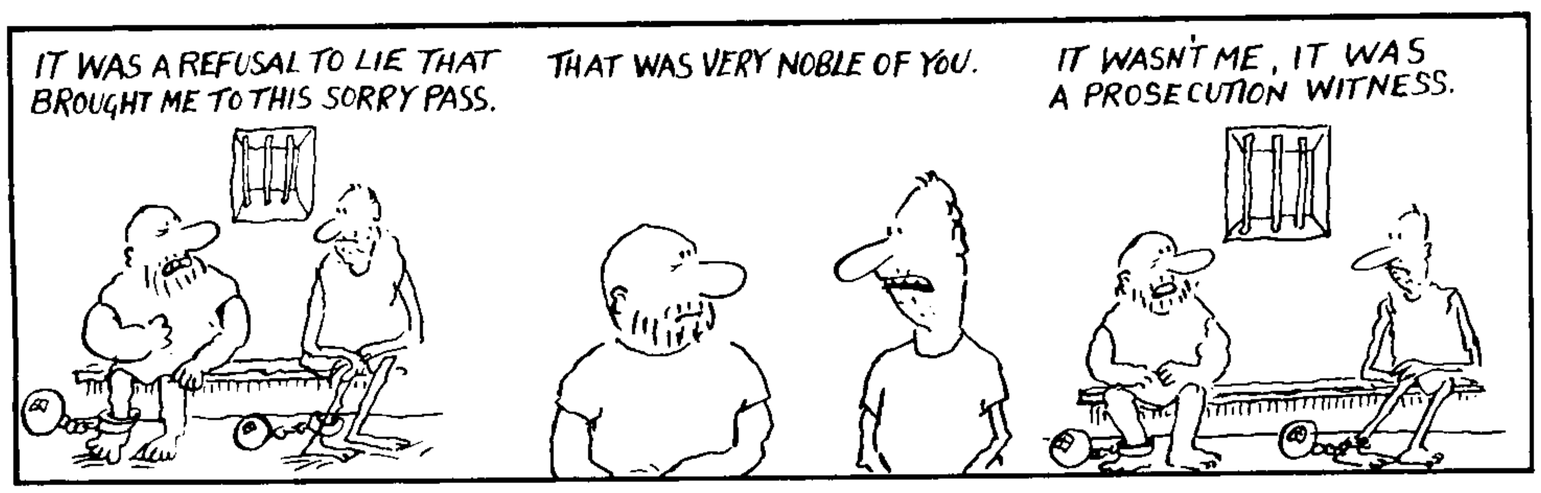
"Michael Jordan, one of the world's greatest defenders — if not one of the best..."
DAVID COLEMAN
(Dan Sampson)

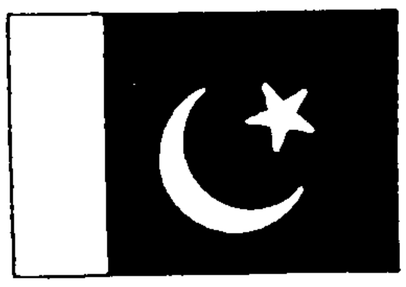
Simon Mayo: *Congratulations! You've just won 20 CD vouchers — what are you going to do with them?*
Contestant: *Buy lots of CDs.*
Radio 1
(Nick Evans)

"Today we look at virginity, and losing it for the first time."
RICHARD MADELEY, ITV
(Simon Roberts)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN


IT WAS A REFUSAL TO LIE THAT BROUGHT ME TO THIS SORRY PASS.
THAT WAS VERY NOBLE OF YOU.
IT WASN'T ME, IT WAS A PROSECUTION WITNESS.



Letter from **Pakistan**

from Our Own Correspondent

AT A GATHERING in Lahore last week, a group of irreverent hacks and spiritualists (those who defy Islamic law by imbibing potent home-brewed spirits) decided the 1992 BCCI Award for the Most Corrupt Government in the World should be given to Pakistan and its money-loving prime minister, Nawaz Sharif.

As well as the BCCI fiasco, Pakistan also saw the collapse of the Co-operative Society when hundreds of thousands of small depositors lost their savings because Sharif and friends had "borrowed" their money and forgotten to return it. Then came the big privatisation scam. Sharif sold the Muslim Commercial Bank to an old crony, Mansha: from small businessman with no fixed assets do multi-millionaires grow.

Sharif's interior minister, Chaudhry Shujaat, has also been having a good time. His brother-in-law Billoo Butt has embarked on a land-grab campaign. The beauty of the scheme lies in its stark simplicity. Find a nice unoccupied plot of urban land. Send in some hoodlums to fence it. Register it in your name. Sell it off. If anyone objects, the ministry of interior will sort them out.

Add to this the fact that Sharif's brother Shahbaz Sharif, who negotiates both political and financial deals, has given the go-ahead for the construction of a new high-speed motorway linking Lahore and Islamabad. The contract has gone to a Japanese construction firm which is complaining that the "commissions" (bribes) it had to pay were high even for our part of the world. Even cabinet ministers are grumbling that proceeds were not evenly distributed.

Sharif's high-jinks have annoyed our president, Ishaque, who thought he had a monopoly in corruption just because he was on the BCCI bankroll since its inception. Ishaque persuaded another old rogue and former PM, Mustafa Jatoi, to ditch Sharif. Jatoi did so and announced that the last general elections had been 95 percent rigged. Later, on reflection, he altered the figure to 90 percent.

President Ishaque is worried that since his protégé Sharif is no longer sharing the spoils, he might also dump Ishaque and find a more pliable head of state. Ishaque is desperate for a gun-carriage funeral and has even been heard to say that to secure one he might dismiss Sharif. But no one really believes he will do so. Meanwhile our new army leader, General Asif Nawaz, remains suspiciously aloof from everyone.

At this stage Benazir Bhutto decided to launch street protests to demand new elections. The protests would have fizzled out, but Sharif responded with a policy of overkill. Benazir and her aged mother were arrested and maltreated. A former cabinet minister, Aitizaz Ahasan, was badly beaten up in prison. Another leader of Bhutto's People's Party, Salman Taseer, was brutally tortured. At the end of the session, the police superintendent in charge said: "Please, sir, it's nothing personal. Government said we are to break your arms and legs. So we obey orders. When you come to power we will beat them up in return if you order. Try and understand."

Thousands of People's Party activists were arrested. They were released when Sharif was told that some US senators were due to visit any day. The Clinton administration, the embassy here tells us, regard Ishaque and Sharif as coldwar relics, creatures of the Reagan-Bush years. Benazir is banking on Washington to ensure free and fair elections.

There is an odd footnote to the whole story. When even those of our newspapers normally friendly to Sharif were attacking him, your London *Times* was singing his praises. One of our Urdu rags suggested the *Times* might have been in receipt of a donation from our ministry of information. The *Times* has threatened a writ. But let them be warned: the high court bar association has passed a unanimous resolution demanding Sharif's resignation and new elections under an interim administration. These lawyers and judges will not look kindly on any writs for libel from the *Times*.

TRUE STORIES

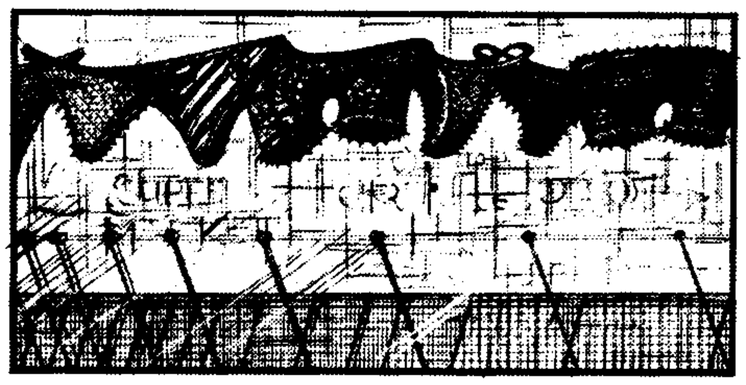
CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

IN HIS report commending Mrs Jayne Immaget for her "dexterous and speedy reaction", District Superintendent Alan Smythe said: "Challenged by Mrs Immaget to return the bunch of grapes he had taken without payment from her fruit display, the thief ran from the shop into the street, whereupon Mrs Immaget picked up a turnip, followed him out, and threw it, hitting him on the back of the head and knocking him unconscious into the arms of a passer-by."

ABANDONING his hunger strike protest against General Sammakki Boom Boomyachalotherm's seizure of power in Thailand, Mr Yip Yan Choo, an ex-Parliamentarian, said: "I did my best, but when General Boomyachalotherm's son, Ubon Boomyachalotherm, sent me a gift of a coffin, and his daughter, Lutie Boomyachalotherm, offered to pay for my funeral, I saw there was no hope for Thailand. Now I shall pray for the whole family."

OVERHEARD by two security officials while boasting of his sexual prowess and pointing to the swell in his jeans as evidence of his claims, Mr Arthur Kingwide was arrested, searched, and found to be wearing a false penis filled with cocaine.

AT a family reunion in Jeddah, Mr Shalah al-Harbi said: "I was so afraid of my father after he tied me up and began making a fire around me that I ran away from home for 45 years, but when, last year, now a rich man, I returned to my father's tent, instead of welcoming me, he put the box containing $200,000.00 that I had brought him as a gift on one side, picked up a stick and beat me black and blue for leaving home without his permission."



MAGISTRATE Angela Song, of the North Singapore Court, heard Ms Mary Lee for the defence say: "My client, Mrs Soo, has been provoked. When Mrs Wan pushed in front of her at the Star Supermarket, and Mrs Soo complained, Mrs Wan took off her panties and waved them in Mrs Soo's face. This incident took place in 1989. Since then, each time Mrs Wan sees my client she takes off her panties and waves them in the air. What can my client do in the face of this insult except remove her own in turn? But now that Mrs Wan's daughter has come of age and is following in her mother's pantie-waving habits Mrs Soo thought it was time to act."

INFORMATION: Straits Times 20.10.92; Miami Herald 18.10.92; Arab News 18.10.92; Singapore Today 20.10.92. MONITORS: Simon Laster, Scott Livingstone, Gerald Whelan, A.M. Warner, David Brazil.

A Poem To Commemorate The Tragic Conflagration Which Engulfed The Historic Castle Of Windsor

by William Rees-McGonagall

'Twas in the month of November 1992
That there befell a disaster which I will tell the noo.
For motorists travelling home on the M4
They saw a sight the like of which they had ne'er seen before.

For many drivers the road it was hard to keep their eyes on
On account of the mighty blaze that lit up the horizon.
The whole night sky was lit with an unearthly glow
For further details they all tuned in to their car radio.

But to the good townsfolk of Windsor there could be little doubt
As to what the hullabaloo was all about.
Thousands of fire engines came in from far and wide
With Royal Berkshire Fire Service emblazoned on the side.

But, alas, the brave firemen had arrived too late
(Perhaps Prince Andrew had mistakenly dialled 888).
As the ravening flames leaped from tower to tower
Mr Peter Brooke proclaimed that it was our heritage's darkest hour.

First to burn was St George's Hall, where Ronald Reagan once dined.
And also Mr Gorbachev, whose reputation subsequently declined.
Of all the state rooms, on this black day in November,
Nothing was left but a smouldering ember.

Oh what a heartrending and dramatic scene
Was this to meet our beloved Queen
When belatedly to her home she came back
Wearing her traditional headscarf and dirty mac.

The nation that night was shocked to learn
How many priceless works of art the fire had managed to burn.
Masterpieces of every kind had gone up in smoke
Including Dutch masters such as Hoogstratten and de Hooch.
(Plus an English artist of whom you've never heard
Who had painted a very important picture of George the Third.)

But all credit must go to the gallant Prince Andy.
(The fact that he was at home turned out to be very handy.)
Under his supervision, the world's largest carpet was carried safely out into the yard,
Only round the edges was it slightly charred.

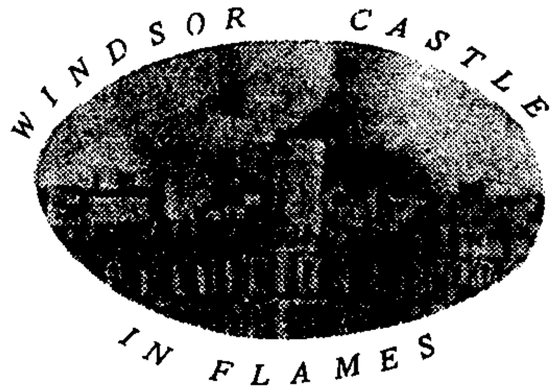
Three battalions of the Household Cavalry worked through the night
To make sure the Royal treasures did not catch alight.
Many fine chairs and antique sofas were also saved
About which Professor Roy Strong most eloquently raved.

Never before had anyone seen such an impressive pile,
Wardrobes, flags and tapestries by the mile.
As they gazed upon the escritoires and coats of mail
Some punters thought they were attending a car boot sale.

For 24 hours, as the fire blazed on the hill
People began to wonder who would foot the bill.
But while this question was being discussed by many
Mr Brooke announced that the taxpayer would cough up every penny.

At once the nation was filled with spleen,
Saying the person who should pay was Her Majesty the Queen.
The percentage that thought this was 99 and a half,
The only dissenter being Mr Charles Moore of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

But then the Queen became angry at this,
Saying that she had had an annus horribilis.
Her Majesty was speaking at a luncheon in the City
Where she begged the nation on her to take pity.



Although she spoke with a heavy cold
The public's lack of sympathy was amazing to behold.
Next day she said: "If you get off our backs
I'll cut the Civil List and pay income tax."

And so by a coincidence some thought rather funny
The Queen suddenly decided to give the public back some money.

© *W. Rees-McGonagall 1992*

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PETER CARTER-RUCK AND PARTNERS

SOLICITORS
PRIVY COUNCIL AGENTS

INCORPORATING
CHRISTOPHER SMITH & CO

75 SHOE LANE
LONDON EC4A 3BQ

To Mr N. Lamont
c/o HM Treasury Accounts Dept.

TO: Receiving phone call from you on 6.7.92.

TO: My secretary advising you I was in a meeting and asking you if you wished to hold.

TO: Your listening to Handel's *Water Music* during lengthy waiting period.

TO: My eventually coming on the line and listening to your account of your difficulties in connection with your tenant Miss Whiplash.

TO: Removal of standard eviction form B793(ii) from filing cabinet by Miss Weatherby.

TO: Filling Parker pen with Quink Ink in order to write signature.

TO: One sheet blotting paper (A4) for the blottation of the aforementioned above document.

TO: Junior Partner's time licking and affixing stamp (1st Class, £49) to above (½ hour).

TO: Conveyance of same to letterbox by Senior Partner, Sir Geoffrey Perkins, on his way home (1 hour).

TO: Miscellaneous expenses incurred in respect of the above litigation – i.e. travel, stationery, entertainment, clothing, toilet requisites and sundry "impedimenta legalis".

TOTAL: £37,374,287.33p

If this bill is settled within 7 days we'll be really annoyed because we can't charge you interest.

Associated Firms

ALDERSHOT GLASGOW JERSEY MANCHESTER
PARIS ROME MOSCOW SAN FRANCISCO

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S NEO-NASTY!?!

top-shelf mags and raunchy shows!?! So what?! Only the Mrs Whitehouse brigade get their knickers in a twist over the man who's kept us smiling through the Depression!?! Three cheers for our very own Porn King!?! Who says Britain's finished?!!

HATS OFF to Bill Wyman!?! He's the rock 'n' rollin' super stud with an eye for tasty teenagers!? OK, so he looks like Frankenstein!? Who cares?! Bill's a sexy Sixties swinger who knows what it's all about!? Good luck to you, Bill, and you might not need the zimmer frame after all!?! So, it's only Mick who can't get no satisfaction!?!?!

BILL WYMAN!?! What a dirty old git (Pardon my French!?!). Snatchin' poor innocent Mandy out of the cradle and then dumpin' her like an unwanted toy!? No wonder she went off her food!? So would you if you woke up next to a hubby who was old enough to be your grandad!? Come on, Bill, stop wangin' and twangin' and pay up! And give her your bus pass while you're at it!

Go on! Crawl back under your Stone (geddit?!).

HATS OFF to Paul Raymond — Britain's wealthiest man!? OK, so he's made his money from

SPARE a thought for Desil Britain's best-loved TV personality *(shurely 'racehorse'? Ed). After years of being under Esther's whip, poor old Desi began to feel the strain!? Good luck in retirement, Desi, and keep taking the sugar cubes. (This is worse than McKay. You're fired. Ed.)*

SO WHAT was our chum Norman Lamont doing hanging around Praed Street buying cheap booze 'n' fags in an all-night offie? It's all right Mr Carter Ruck!?! A girl can ask a question, can't she??????

HERE THEY ARE, Glenda's Paddington Bares (Geddit?).

● **ROBIN COOK:** With his little beard and twinkling eyes he's my Gnomeo Romeo!?! Geddit!?!

● **PIERRE MARCO WHITE:** He's the crazy chef who's left his wife!! Well, he can come round with his whisk and put a bun in my oven any old time!?!

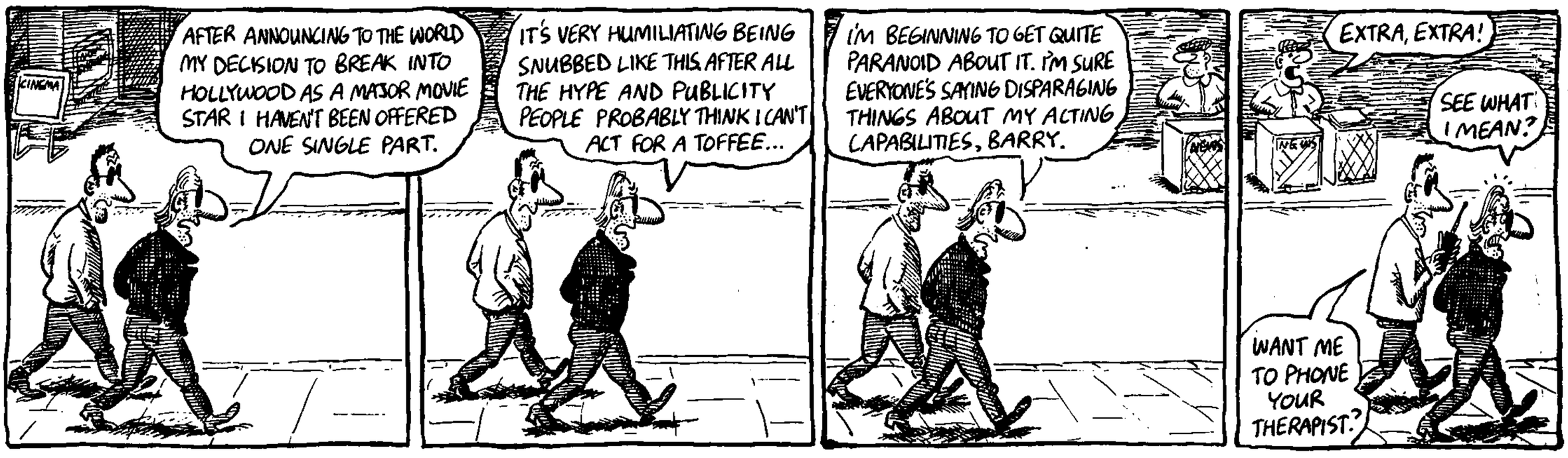
● **JOHN ONANUGA:** Mr Lamont's late night wine merchant!!? Crazy name, crazy guy!!

Hasta la Visa or Access baby!

(You're fired! Ed.)

Celeb

LIGGER


CINEMA
AFTER ANNOUNCING TO THE WORLD MY DECISION TO BREAK INTO HOLLYWOOD AS A MAJOR MOVIE STAR I HAVEN'T BEEN OFFERED ONE SINGLE PART.
IT'S VERY HUMILIATING BEING SNUBBED LIKE THIS. AFTER ALL THE HYPE AND PUBLICITY PEOPLE PROBABLY THINK I CAN'T ACT FOR A TOFFEE...
I'M BEGINNING TO GET QUITE PARANOID ABOUT IT. I'M SURE EVERYONE'S SAYING DISPARAGING THINGS ABOUT MY ACTING CAPABILITIES, BARRY.
NEWS
EXTRA, EXTRA!
SEE WHAT I MEAN?
WANT ME TO PHONE YOUR THERAPIST?

POETRY CORNER

Lines On The Departure Of Mr Alan "Fluff" Freeman From The Presentation Of The "Pick Of The Pops" Programme On BBC Radio One *(Get on with it. Ed)*

So. Farewell
Then

Alan Freeman.

"Greetings
Pop-Pickers."

That was
Your catchphrase.

You used to
Be Number
One.

But now
You have fallen
Out of
The charts.

It happens
To all of
Us.

Sooner or
Later.

D.J. Thribb (17½)

The Daily Hellograph

Who Should Foot The Bill?

ONLY one question has dominated all public discussion in recent days. Can the taxpayer reasonably be expected to pay for Mr Lamont's outstanding Access account? Or should the Chancellor pay it himself?

On the one hand, Mr Lamont occupies one of the great offices of State and plays a vital part in the fabric of our national life. On the other, at this time of recession *(contd p. 94)*

Sad Mandy in new slimming shock

by Our Men In The Divorce Courts **Hugh Jaffee and Tiny Settlement**

THERE were gasps in court yesterday as a mysterious slimming disease struck again in the tangled relationship between Miss Mandy Smith, 13, and Mr Bill Wyman, 107.

Stunned observers watched as Ms Bimbo lost millions of pounds in seconds as her waif-like settlement was finally revealed. Once her figure was a stunning 36,24,36 million pounds plus the house. Suddenly her claim was sadly reduced to a painfully thin £500,000.

Crock Star

This tiny fraction of Mr Whyohwhyman's colossal fortune was explained by experts as the result of the syndrome known to doctors as "100 grand per bonk? That's not bad."

The judge, summing up the case, said: "Who is Bill Beaumont?"

Mr Whyohwhyme is 192.

POETRY CORNER

Lines Written By Ted Whohes, The Poet Laureate, On The Decision By Her Majesty To Pay Income Tax

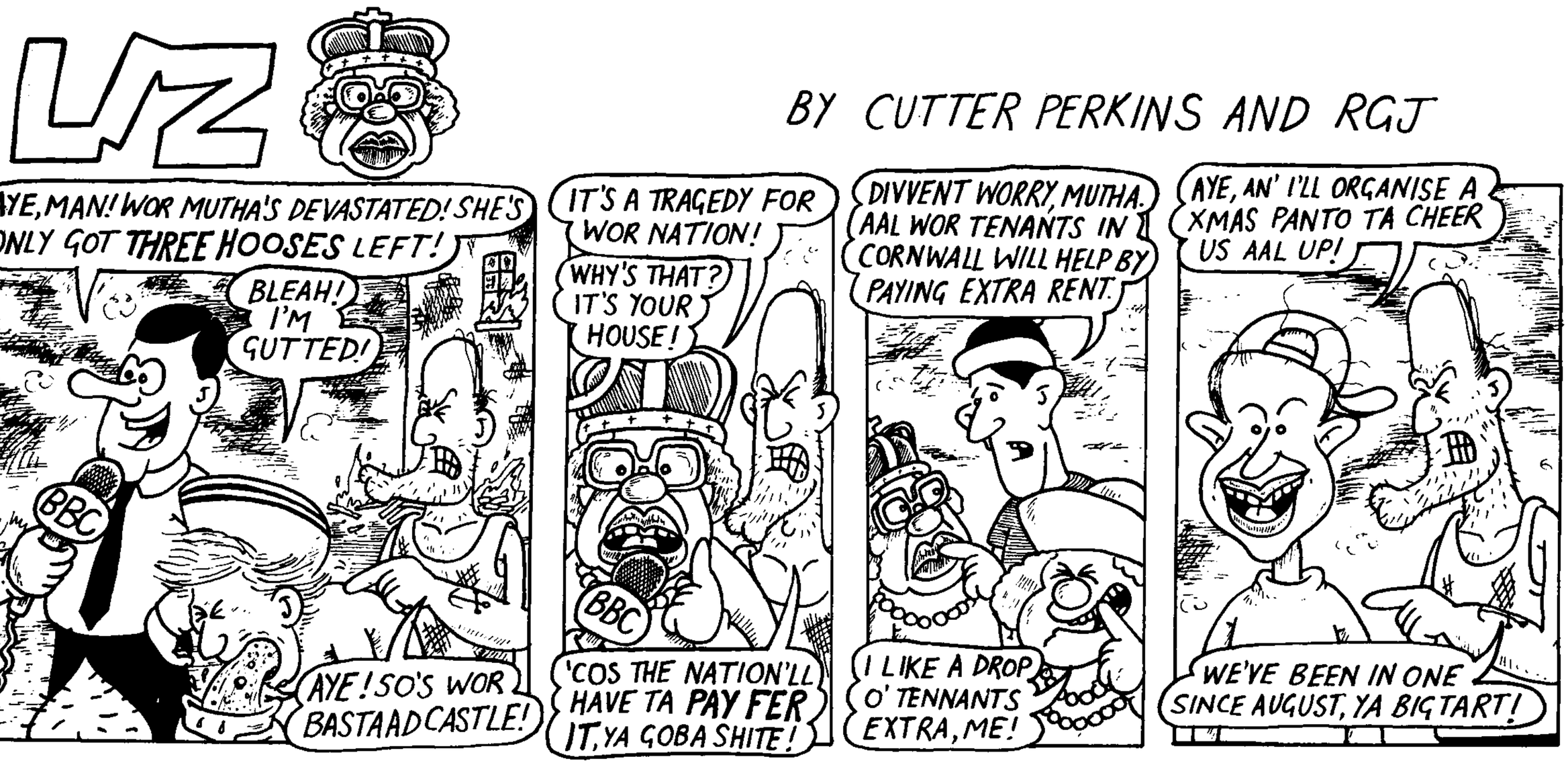
Budgie on swing.
Trill, trill.
Bell rings. Swing swings.
Budgie preens in mirror.
Old Budge pretty
pleased with himself.

Cat watches. Door ajar.
Claws unsheathed.
Cat creeps.
Tweet, tweet.
Everything fine,
Thinks Old Budge.

Leap. Lash. Feathers fly.
Blood spurts. Wing
crunch.
Red gore on yellow
plumage.
Cat purrs. Teeth flecked
with rawflesh.
Cage empty.
No need to open
Whiskas tin tonight.

Hasta la vista,
Budgie.

© *Arnold Schwarzenegger 1992*


UZ
BY CUTTER PERKINS AND RGJ
AYE, MAN! WOR MUTHA'S DEVASTATED! SHE'S ONLY GOT THREE HOOSES LEFT!
BLEAH! I'M GUTTED!
BBC
AYE! SO'S WOR BASTAAD CASTLE!
IT'S A TRAGEDY FOR WOR NATION!
WHY'S THAT? IT'S YOUR HOUSE!
BBC
'COS THE NATION'LL HAVE TA PAY FER IT, YA GOBA SHITE!
DIVVENT WORRY, MUTHA. AAL WOR TENANTS IN CORNWALL WILL HELP BY PAYING EXTRA RENT.
I LIKE A DROP O' TENNANTS EXTRA, ME!
AYE, AN' I'LL ORGANISE A XMAS PANTO TA CHEER US AAL UP!
WE'VE BEEN IN ONE SINCE AUGUST, YA BIG TART!

E.J. Thribb, Ted Whohes and much more. POETRY CORNER; £4.99, out now!

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

I am glad to say that the Iraqi Superglue affair is finally over! I have had the brilliant idea of asking a very important judge to hold a full inquiry. This means that nobody is allowed to talk about it ever again, including me! Not that I ever knew about it in the first place. Oh no.

Unfortunately the Labour Party do not seem to have got the message and go on asking silly questions about it in the House of Commons. If they are not careful I will have to appoint another judge to look into them!

In the afternoon I had to fly to Bruges to meet the Belgian prime minister for what Mr O'Donnell called a very important photo-opportunity. We had to stand in front of lots of cameras with our arms around each other in a continental manner to show what good friends we are. Which we are! Next time I must remember to ask Mr O'Donnell what the Belgian is called.

Tuesday

I set my alarm clock at 3.30 this morning because I had to fly to Athens, which I think is in Luxembourg. We had to have a very important emergency photo-opportunity to talk about someone called Gatt, who I think is an American. *It* was quite friendly, *except for a Frenchman who* spent an *hour* shouting at me, saying: "You have been the most disastrous President in history!" I think he had mistaken me for M. Mitterand, who in my judgement is not at all popular any more, unlike some of us who won a great election victory six months ago!

After the meeting I flew back to London to start my day's work. Unfortunately by the time I got home it was half past five so it was time to go home, although for me this only means switching off the lights and going upstairs! My wife Norman said I was looking very tired as a result of my hard day sitting in an aeroplane. She told me there had been a lot of messages while I was away, about the economy, the trade figures, a fire at Windsor, the tube strike, some mistakes in the exam results tables, British Rail sacking 50,000 people, the Superglue affair and a man from Access asking to speak very urgently to Mr Lamont.

"Honestly," I said. "Don't these people realise that I've been busy with some very important meetings preparing for my very very important meeting in Edinburgh?"

"What are you going to do there?" she asked, as she gave me my Sainsbury's Lean Cuisine Dinner from the microwave.

"Wait and see," I said, in my special enigmatic voice.

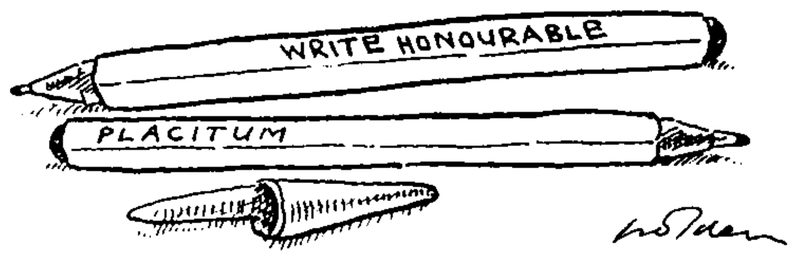
"You mean you don't know," she said in a not inconsiderably rude way. Sometimes I think I am the only person who understands the importance of what I am doing.

Wednesday

When I got back from my breakfast meeting in Lisbon, I think it was, with my good friend the President of the Netherlands, Herr Kohl, I did not feel jet-lagged at all, which was just as well, as I had a very important Cabinet meeting to go to.

When Mr Waldegrave brought in the tea and Viennese Whirls at 11 o'clock, I put on my special stern voice and asked him why he hadn't told me about the Superglue affair on 13th July 1989 as that bearded Labour man Mr Cook keeps on saying.

"We didn't tell you because in those days you were just some silly little twit who no one thought was going to be prime minister," he said. Everyone laughed.



At first I was in no small measure prepared to be quite annoyed at this, but then Mr Hurd pointed out that this was a very convenient admission by Mr Waldegrave as it let me off the hook completely. When Mr Waldegrave left the room, Mr Hurd dialled the police and told them to investigate Mr Waldegrave at once since he was as much to blame for this whole sorry mess as Mr Clark.

Thursday

Very fortunately today I was not required to fly to see one of our European friends, so for once I was able to begin work nice and early. No sooner had I finished re-arranging the biros — something I have not had time to do since I became the President of Europe — than there was a knock at the door and Norma Lamont came in looking not inconsiderably ashen-faced. He was holding a piece of paper and said: "Prime Minister, terrible news. These figures have just come in and everything is far worse than I had thought."

"I am very sorry to hear this, Norma," I said. "What is it this time? The balance of payments?"

"No, Prime Minister," he said in a trembling voice. "Just look at this."

I must admit that, although I was once the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I was in no small measure puzzled to see entries such as "Paddington Wine Mart £49.63", "Star of Uttar Pradesh Take-Away £11.14" and "Frith Street Adult Video Centre £99.99". At the end it said in red letters "Owing to non-payment of your outstanding account of £4,812.08 we have to advise you that we are taking legal action unless the minimum sum of £2.08 is forthcoming within 17 days."

"I am sorry, Norma," I said, "I do not understand. I thought we owed at least £44 billion."

Mr Lamont made a funny strangled noise, pummelled his chest like a chimpanzee and left the room by the window, which I thought was a not very prudent course of action since we were on the fourth floor.

Friday

I think Mr Waldegrave is trying to make up to me for not having told me about the Superglue. First thing this morning he came in to say that he had got a brilliant idea to save the Government and to make me popular again. Not that I am unpopular, oh no. It is just that people do not understand how busy I am.

"My plan is to set up a special Charter Help Line," he said, "for anyone who wants to complain about anything they think has gone wrong."

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" I said to him. "We do not want millions of people ringing up in the middle of the night complaining about Mr Lamont's deficit or Mr Hurd's Balkan initiative or any of the other things the Government is doing."

"Oh no," he said, "they will only be allowed to complain about things like their train being late or having to wait too long in the out-patients at a hospital. But this will show them that we are really trying to get things right, and make the government more efficient."

I told Mr Waldegrave that I thought his idea was absolutely brilliant. "Oh yes," I said, "and I will give you another example." I told him that only last week I had sent a very important letter which had taken three whole working days to arrive, even though I had remembered to put on the post code and also it had a first-class stamp. I was about to tell him some more very good examples, when for some reason he also climbed out through the window like Mr Lamont.

It is certainly curious how some members of my government are beginning to behave these days.

Saturday

Mr Lamont came in again today wearing a deep-sea diving suit. He opened the little window in his helmet and asked if I had read the papers. "Of course not," I said. "I am far too busy preparing for Edinburgh."

"Good," he said. "Because I am not going to resign."

"You have my full support," I assured him. "Just like David Mellor."

Don't miss the* MAJOR DIARIES *book, £4.99 - last week's NUMBER ONE best-seller.

XMAS VIDEO GAME OFFER

NUMBERTENDO

Yes, it's the one they're all talking about! The ultimate game, featuring Super Majoro, the little man in glasses who has endeared himself to no one.

Pit Super Majoro against a series of challenges and watch him fail them all. Can he escape the falling pounds? Can he dodge the embarrassing Mellors? Can he avoid the Iraqi Superguns? No.

Numbertendo will keep you amused for as long as four years or until someone comes up with a better idea.

Relax and disappear into the weird world of Super Majoro and cut yourself off from reality.

£84.99

Says Hello's *JONATHAN ROSS: "Of all the video games on the market, this is the most moronic. I love it."*

NUMBERTENDO

Skill level	Nil
Graphics	One-colour mono (grey)
Rating	Third/Fourth
Cost	Your job, and probably your house

IDEAL GIFT

NEASDEN CHAIRMAN LASHES OUT AT PRESSMAN

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations, as indeed was I, when Brigadier Buffy Cohen, Chairman of Neasden FC, hit out at the Football League's disciplinary committee and myself.

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Casualty Ward With The Black Eye And The Missing Teeth

The 24-stone Launderette-to-Massage-Parlour magnate saw red when he received a massive £50 million fine for "irregularities with the books".

Propping Up The Barnet

The North Circular Relegation League investigators (Mr M.P. Todmarsh A.I.C.A.) discovered certain discrepancies in the club ledgers, which led to the official reprimand.

According to insiders, Cohen had made a payment of £10,000 to a "Mr M. Mouse", whom he had entered as a new centre forward in the 91-92 season.

On the same page he had added a fee of £50,000 for a "Mr D. Duck" following his supposed transfer to Neasden FC from an alleged Italian club called Pizza Hut.

Own Goal

When confronted with these allegations by reporters (myself) from the *Neasden Evening Argus*, available from Monty Gerhardi's "Fags 'n' Mags 'n' Vids" Emporium any time after mid-day, Brigadier Cohen explained: "There is no truth at all in these accusations. To prove that I am innocent, I am going to offer you a large sum of money."

When reporters (still myself) told Cohen that they could not be bribed — particularly not for the measly sum of £5 — the Neasden boss expressed his displeasure by smashing me in the face and kicking my head in.

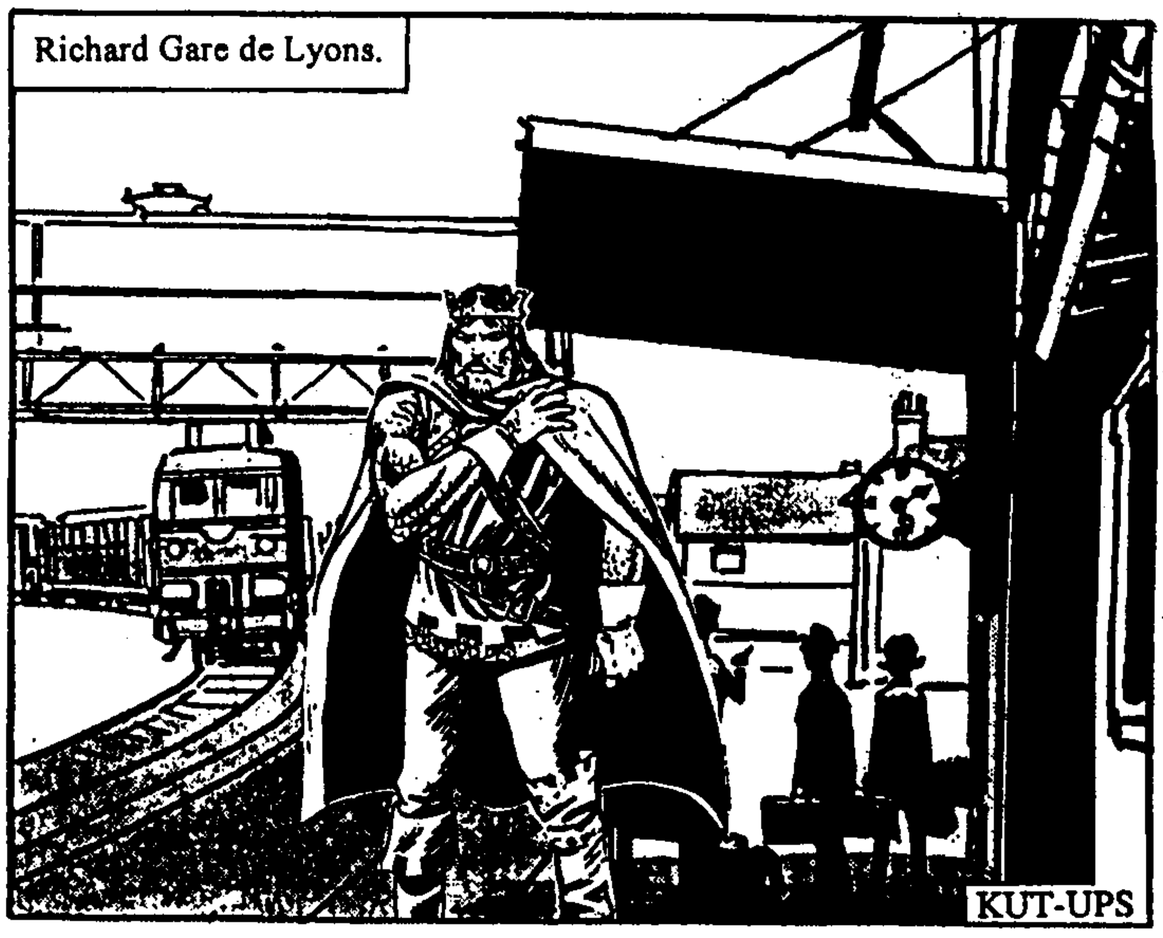
Photos page 2, 3, 4, 5 and 94.

LATE RESULT

Vinny Jones	**25,000**
Stan Flashman	**50,000**

Yes! It's News At Ten Rhyming Slang!

Bong!	**Format wrong**
News At Ten	**Copied CNN**
American agenda	**Content slender**
New set	**Bring back Burnet**
Monitors on wall	**Where's Sandy Gall?**
Julia Somerville	**She's there still**
Focus on Britain	**She's standing, Trevor's sitting**
Michael Brunson	**Not much fun, son**
Big Ben	**Grey men**
After the Break	**Skateboarding snake** *(shurely 'parrot'? Ed)*
Anchor	**Trevor Macdonald** *(This doesn't rhyme. Ed)*
And finally	**Z-z-z-z-z** *(Nor does this. Ed)*



A SYLVIE KRIN SPECIAL

OUT OF THE FLAMES

BY

SYLVIE KRIN

THE STORY SO FAR: The Castle at Windsor has burnt down.

Now read on:

A COLD bleak autumn sun filtered through the charred rafters of the Great Hall of St Bruno, picking out the frail figure of an old man shuffling cautiously through the rubble. On either side of him were what remained of the magnificent mural depicting the Insanity of George III by the great Geraldo Scarfini. A discerning eye could just see the ailing monarch being bled by leeches while talking to a tree. It bore an uncanny resemblance to someone, thought the old man, but who?

"Ah, Sir Laurens, my friend and mentor! How good of you to come! At such a time as this one sort of needs er... er..."

The voice was unmistakeably that of Prince Charles, the Heir of Sorrows, who was standing commandingly behind a makeshift trestle-table on which was spread a series of architectural drawings.

"My liege," quavered the elderly sage, for it was indeed he. "What can one say?"

He waved his familiar African staff, hewn from hard Buthelezi ebony, at the smoking carcass of the once mighty English fortress.

"We see here the ruins of a great house. The House of Windsor no less." His voice trembled as he continued. "The ancients believed that fire was a symbol of divine wrath. The palace of Agapanthus, you may recall, sire, was consumed when the young Prince Nintendos offended the goddess Diana by forming an adulterous liaison with the wife of the captain of the Royal Guard."

Charles listened in rapt attention. "That's amazing. You mean it's all sort of symbolic?"

"Symbollox," said Prince Andrew jovially, walking past in a yellow fireman's hat, carrying a length of hosepipe.

"If you ask me it was Auntie Margaret having a quiet fag in the Chapel."

"We are rather busy, actually," Charles told his brother icily. "Perhaps some other time."

He was relieved as his brother, ever the man of action, moved away, opened the nozzle of his hose and applied a jet of white foam to Scarfini's masterpiece.

Absorbed by Sir Laurens's notion of the fire as spiritual metaphor, Charles pursued his line of enquiry. "So what you are saying is what you put in that book you sent me last year, *The Highways and Byways of the Shadow Self*. At one point you wrote, and I copied it into my commonplace book: 'Red sky at night, Windsor Castle's alight'. That's quite prophetic in its way, don't you see?"

The old man sat down on what was left of a 14th century gilt embonpoint designed by the great Dutch master Häagen-Dazs.

"Indeed. Indeed. Indeed."

Sir Laurens lit his pipe and pulled ruminatively. Immediately Prince Edward leapt from behind a smoke-blackened pillar and emptied a bucket of sand over his head.

"Can't you read, Grandad? This is a no-smoking area. You could start a fire!"

Charles groaned as Edward, wearing a T-shirt saying "Princes Do It Royally", ran off to refill the bucket. "Talk about shutting the stable floor after the roof has er..." Words failed him as he contemplated his family and their feeble response to this overwhelming tragedy.

Pater "unavoidably detained" at a vital polo match in Argentina. Andrew showing off in front of the TV cameras as though he were in charge. No sign of Anne, and as for Diana, where was she? Listening to some rock group in Paris, no doubt, and being photographed for the *Hello* magazine. It really was... could one say...?

"Appalling," interposed his old friend, attempting to dislodge the lumps of sand from his white locks. Again Charles resumed:

"As I was saying, surely fire can be a purifying thingie as well as a destroyer. If it hadn't been for the great Fire of London, one would never have had St Paul's... I mean I see this as a chance, a challenge, a fresh start..."

Enthusiastically Charles seized a large sheet of paper and thrust the blueprint under the great seer's rheumy eyes.

"It's only a rough, but you can see my friend Sir Quentin de Quinlan has sketched out this amazing new-look Windsor. This is a huge conservatory here, leading off the Atrium in which we preserve endangered trees. You see here he's drawn a Hagwood, a giant Karaoke, and this one is a Bonsai Dog Doo Dah tree, which is very very rare. I think it's the only one actually and it comes from Java..."

Sir Laurens nodded, took off his spectacles and closed his eyes thoughtfully.

"You see, it's a tremendous opportunity for change, progress, development. You see here the old Sir Charles Moore gallery has now become a craft workshop and wholemeal organic bakery. It's the old values but in a new form..."

Charles was pointing animatedly to a series of low-rise thatched battlements when the strident voice of his mother broke in. "Charles, there you are."

She had emerged from the Royal Portakabin hastily erected by the Ministry of Works and was accompanied by a man in a dark suit carrying a suitcase.

"Oh, mater, I'm so glad you've come. I was just showing Sir Laurens my vision for the new-look Castle. I know you'll like it very much indeed, especially this multi-cultural chapel in the East Wing. There's a sort of lump of granite in the middle and no iconography at all... no seating either... it's a challenge, a renewal, a rebirth for the monarchy as well as the building, don't you see?"

"Charles," the Queen sighed, pushing his plans onto the floor with a sweep of the hand, "this is Mr Watkinson from the Heritage Ministry. He will be in charge of the restoration. As you will see from his design, everything will be restored as it was. The building has been damaged and there will be some minor changes to reflect this. But the House of Windsor essentially remains the same."

She gave Charles a meaningful glare. A sudden gust of chill wind caught Sir Quentin's blueprint and blew it into a pile of smouldering embers, where it flared up for a second and then was extinguished forever.

TV LICENCE FEE TO STAY

Government's shock reform

by Our Media Staff
Jane Thynne-Stuff

ANNOUNCING the biggest shake-up in broadcasting history, the Government today pledged that the BBC would continue to be funded by licence-payers.

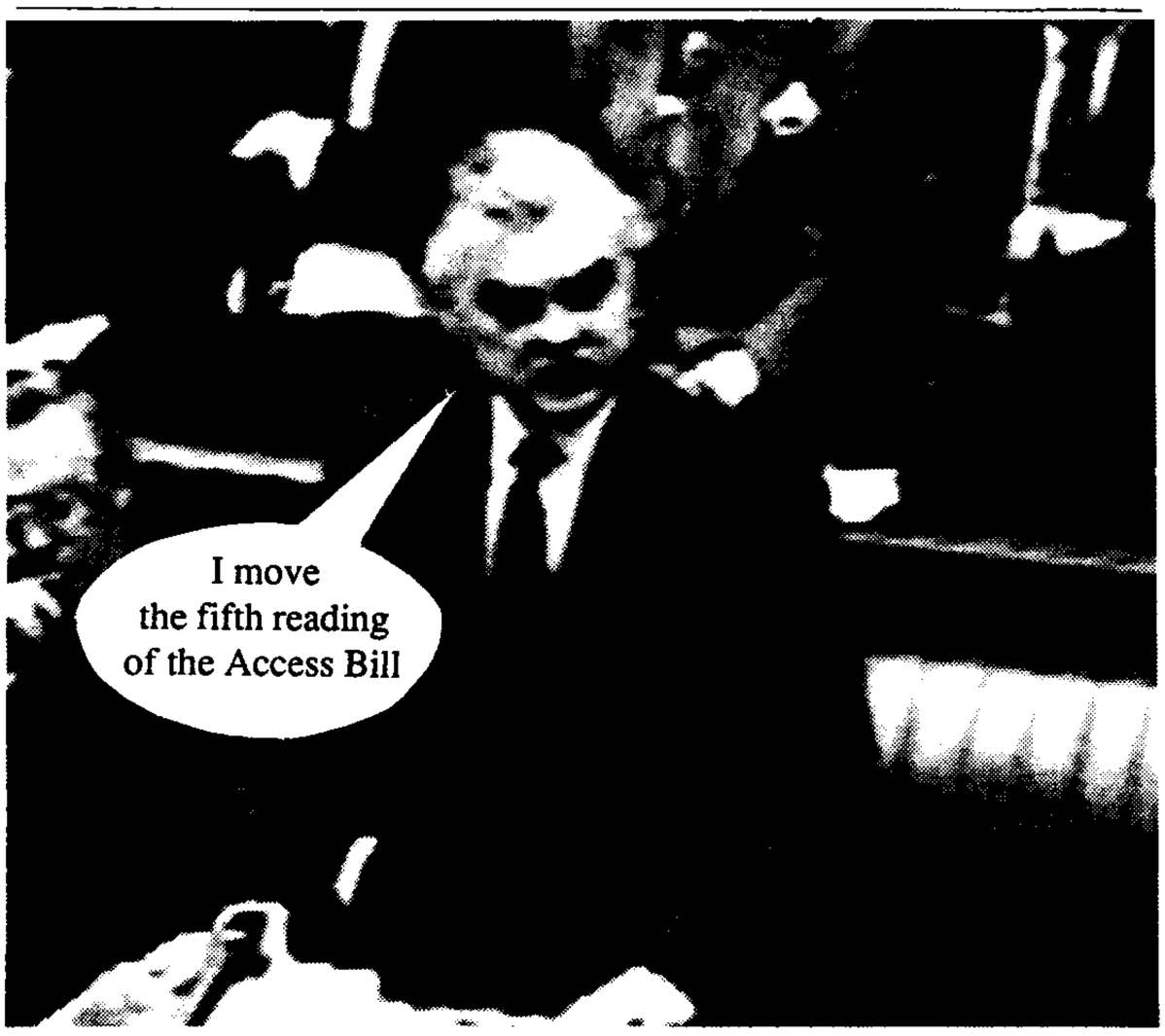
Other shock proposals in the controversial green paper on "Broadcasting in the 21st Century" include:

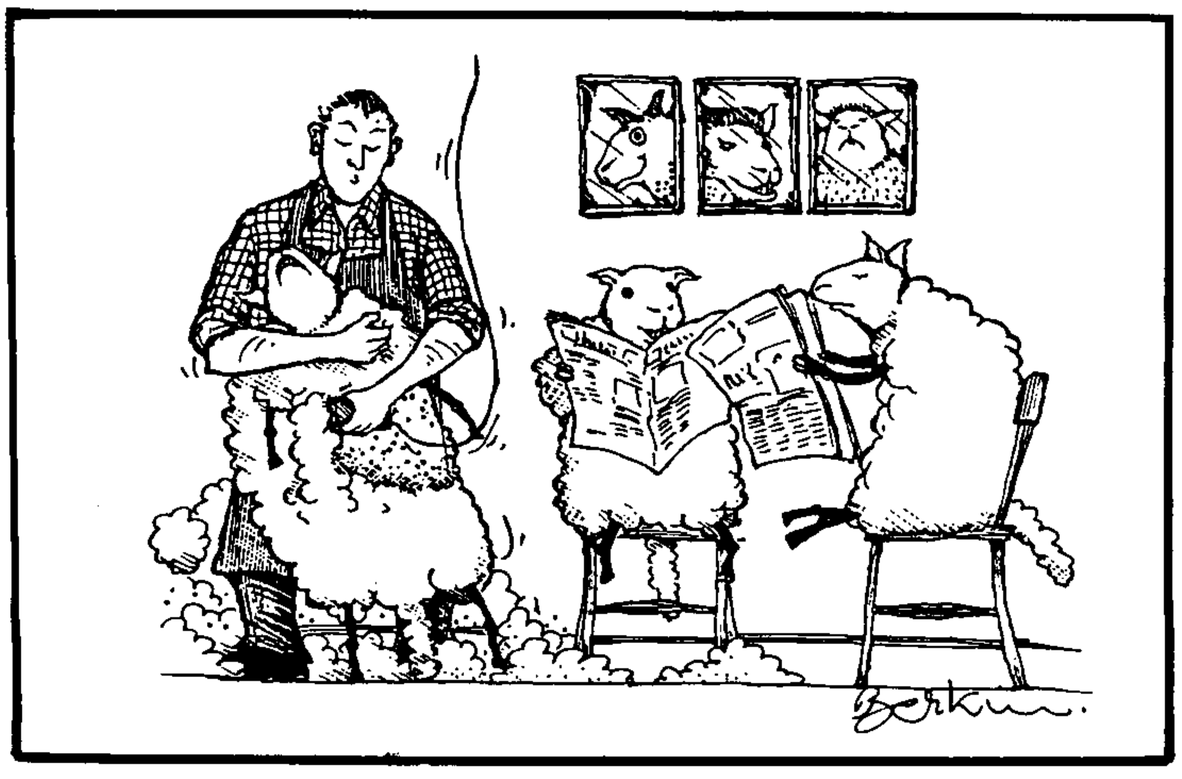
- **Only two BBC television channels.**
- **Radios 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to remain as they are.**
- **"Quality" and "public service" to be the new watchwords for the Corporation.**
- **The name to be changed to the BBC.**
- ***Woman's Hour* to be returned to the afternoons.**

The BBC management reacted angrily yesterday to the Government's reform package. "We have been trying to destroy the BBC for the past five years," said Sir Marmalade Gussett, President for Life of the BBC, "and now along comes the Government and tells us to keep it as it is."

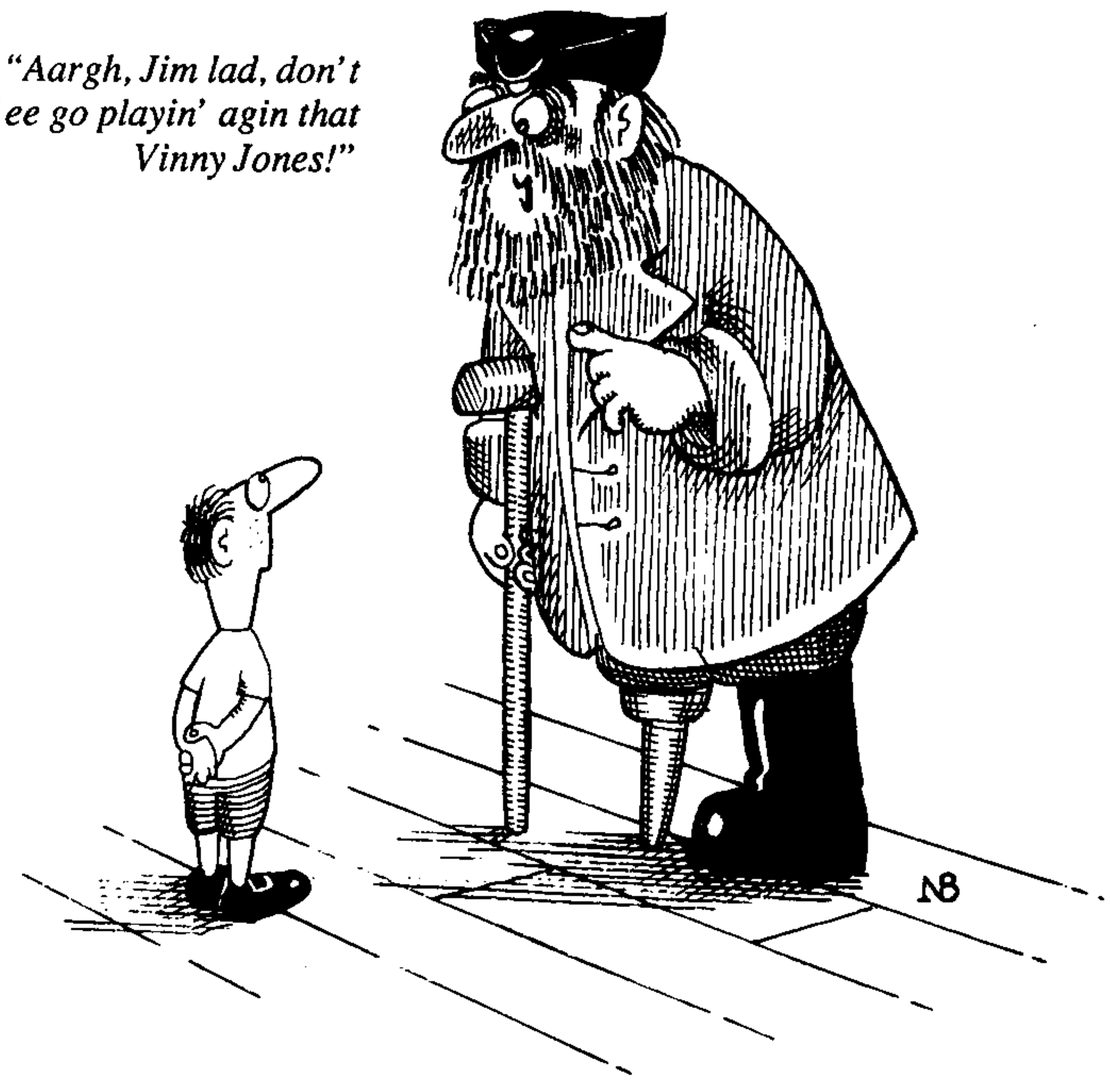
"It is an outrage," added Director-General-In-Waiting Mr John Berk. "We will not take this lying down after a long lunch."

Sir Marmalade Gussett is 178.





"Aargh, Jim lad, don't 'ee go playin' agin that Vinny Jones!"



The PETER McLIE *Column*

HAS anyone except myself noticed that Her Majesty the Queen has been on the throne for exactly forty years?

You would think someone might have laid on some kind of a celebration of this great event — such as a luncheon at the Guildhall.

But no!

What a splendid year it has been for Her Majesty. She must look back on it with a great deal of pleasure.

You could almost call it an *annus mirabilis*.

☐ **MY friend Willy Rushton has bought a new hat.**

It is in a bonny tweed. And he certainly looks fine and dandy in it!

I often wonder why more people don't take a leaf out of Willy's book and wear a hat.

When I was young we had a saying: "If you want to get a hat, get a head."

Isn't life grand — with or without a hat!

☐ *HAVE YOU seen that new TV programme they're all talking about?*

Isn't it terrible — especially that man?

No wonder nobody's watching it.

I sometimes think there's been nothing good on television since my old friend Willy Rushton kept us all in stitches on TW3.

Coincidentally I ran into Willy the other day, and he told me he has bought a new hat.

I say hats off to Willy — or, rather, should I say "hats on"?

☐ **I WAS in a restaurant recently, and the waiter brought me a very clever new device for eating soup.**

It has a small concave receptacle at one end, attached to a long handle at the other.

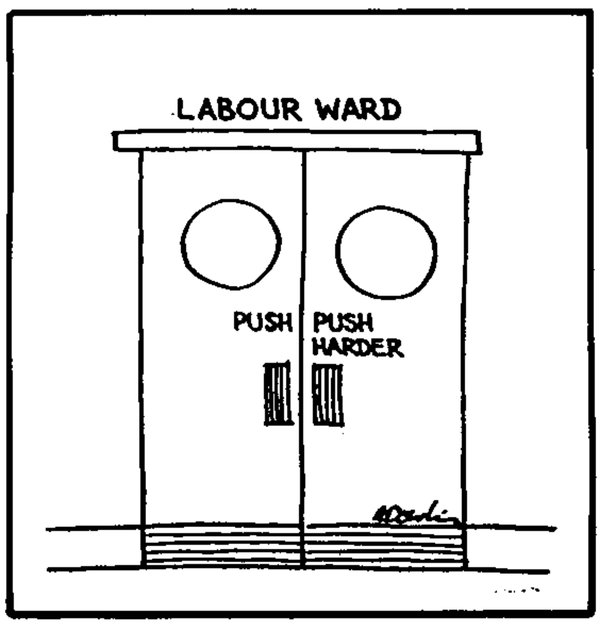
You pick up the soup and lift it to your mouth while it's still hot.

In my day in Peterhead we had to drink our broth straight from the bowl — and a right mess we made of it!

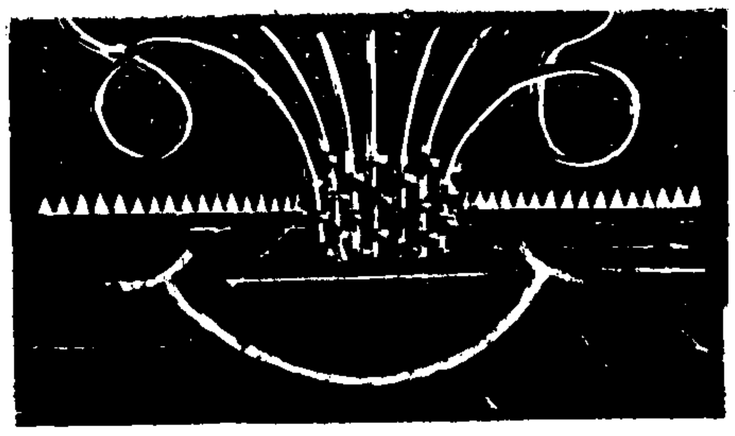
Let us hope some clever fellow like Sir Clive Sinclair can find a way to manufacture this brilliant British invention.

He could make millions — even in this recession.

(You're fired. Ed.)



DIARY



WILLIAM REES-MOGG

As I was being shaved yesterday morning, I found myself reflecting that no English monarch since the death of Edward III can be put quite in the first class, though Queen Elizabeth I was undoubtedly sound, and Queen Victoria very nearly Beta Plus. And what of God? Though His mind is too eclectic to be considered truly first-rate, He may still be justly credited with one or two good ideas, the Rees-Mogg family being just one example. We stretch back twelve centuries to Ras Mag, the distinguished President of the Ancient Pict Chamber of Commerce, and a notably successful Vice-Chairman of the Woad Preservation Society. To we Rees-Moggs, Windsor Castle is a comparatively modern, somewhat — dare I say it — *nouveau riche* building, as are its present tenants. But I still incline to the point of view that it should be rebuilt. Life itself is not unlike Windsor Castle: sturdy yet fragile, admitting visitors yet essentially private, permanent yet strangely temporary.

As I grow older, I find myself taking up interests that, in my youth, I might well have eschewed as immature. Until last week, for instance, I had never felt the need to tie my own shoelaces, finding it more convivial to employ someone else for the purpose. The Moggs, true to their Somerset blood, have never set much store by the base technicalities of existence. Consequently the art of tying a shoelace was one I never learned. As a child for a short while, and then as Editor of *The Times*, Vice Chairman of the BBC, Chairman of the Arts Council and later Deputy Chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, I found that employing someone else for the chore saved me time I could usefully spend on re-reading and improving the great works of Peruvian literature.

But in Wessex we have a particular love of walking, and this, last Sunday, was to prove my — and my shoelaces' — undoing. As I was perambulating in a meadow, reflecting that Edward Heath might still be Prime Minister to this day if only he had followed my advice on the Gold Standard, I noticed to my horror that my right shoelace was utterly undone.

What was I to do? My Latin education — even my Presidency of the Oxford Union and later Vice-Presidency of the Mother's Union, followed by a holiday job as Chairman of the World Bank — had not prepared me in any way for this fearful eventuality. It seems to me that Plato, for all his admirable efforts in other fields, teaches us little about shoelaces. At first, I attempted to stumble on, but in so doing fell face downwards into a circular pool of mud, marking the spot where a cow had been recently standing. I then fiddled with the laces, but found that my mind existed on too high a plane to be able to deal with such hapless threads.

At last, the solution came to me: I removed my trousers, tore them neatly in two, and then knotted each trouser leg around each shoe. Though slightly bumpy, my walk back was hugely enjoyable, and enlivened by a fine breeze circulating around my legs and upper regions. Henceforth, I will be urging the present Cabinet when next they come to see me to do away with shoelaces. This will have the effect of taking our minds off the recession, and so sterling will recover in no time at all. In many ways, life is like a great shoelace, useful only when done up, standing for what it stands for, a solid yet impermanent knot.

Wittgenstein was no intellectual, and only a second-rate brain, but in many ways he was the superior of Sartre, who was partly intellectual, but a third-rate brain, and roughly the equal of Russell, who was almost certainly an intellectual, but a fourth-rate brain. It is telling, though, that not one of these three men rose to the position of Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council: history teaches us that the combination of an intellectual with a first-rate brain is notoriously hard to find.

I have known a great many powerful and learned men in my time, none, I think more widely-read than myself, though one or two arguably more knowledgeable about some of the more obscure of the Jacobean philatelists.

I find myself in agreement with Socrates, whom I never knew personally, when he commends a proper reading programme as worthy of any young man's attention. My distinguished 15th century forebear, Henry Moog of Kidderminster, was an inveterate reader. Having been appointed Director-General of the Kidderminster Chamber of Commerce in 1476, a post he was later to pass on to his grandson, Henry Ross-Mugg of Kidderminster, he came to realise that life was like an enamel tea-cup, chipped in parts, but still useful, most particularly for the sipping of tea. Such knowledge as he had — and I suspect my own knowledge surpasses his in virtually every respect — was gained through reading the works of our joint 12th century ancestor, St Hilary of Mog Hill. St Hilary counselled against the vanities of this world. "The truly learned man," she once wrote, "hath no need to boast of his learning." Words of wisdom, indeed, and echoed, I might add, in my recent re-reading of the complete works of Livy, Pliny, Silly and Libby (Purves) and also in the conversations I have granted every post-war Prime Minister (few of them first-rate, incidentally, but one or two perfectly sound).

In preparation for my new role as Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, I put aside a very great deal of time to re-reading Plato, the Pentateuch and Mayhew, with more contemporary studies such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *Mayfair* also proving exceptionally informative. I now spend a large part of each day watching the "television", an occupation of which I had never availed myself before.

I must confess that for the first three months I couldn't see the fascination it held for so many millions of one's fellow Britons. It seemed to me a very dull affair: an utterly grey square, roughly two foot by two foot, fronted by a panel of glass. After many days staring at this blank "television", I began to realise that life itself might be an utterly grey square, fronted by a panel of glass, to be gazed at in search of useful meaning.

After three months, I was interrupted from my contemplations when a technician put his head around the door. "But the set's not on, squire," he commented. He then fiddled with a knob at the front. To my astonishment, a variety of moving pictures suddenly came onto the screen, and sound emerged from nowhere! It was now, I was informed, "switched on". As Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, I now watch these moving pictures day after day. I conclude that we ignore the progress of science at our peril. My favourite programme? *Upstairs Downstairs*, a vivid portrait of day-to-day life in contemporary England.

Rear Columns:
Collected Diaries of the Famous
ed by Craig Brown
Private Eye/Corgi, £4·99

AUBERON WAUGH

The book is a masterpiece. Craig Brown has a genius which transcends mere parody to become, through the occasional touch of real anger bathed in surreal farce, a work of art which can be set beside anything produced this century.

WEEKEND TELEGRAPH

"I want to marry a Rolling Stone before I grow up"

O·B·N

Sir, I am encouraged to hear that her Majesty's government has promised that the castle will be fully restored but I, and I am sure others, would like to contribute towards the cost of some aspect of the restoration, both as a way of showing our pride in our national heritage and as a way of declaring our loyalty and affection to our Sovereign at this time.

DR JOHN BURCHMORE
Letter to The Times

Submitted by A.M. Goldring.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Literary Review

Eco disaster

Portent
James Herbert
(Hodder, £14.99)

THINK OF James Herbert and you think of rats. Richard Adams scored with rabbits. William Horwood made it with moles. But James Herbert? He's the rodent operative.

His first novel, *The Rats*, was a proper literary nasty: rats behaving badly; rats rather falling down on the highest standards of behaviour. Herbert smartly followed it up with *Lair*. As the title delicately hints, this wasn't quite the sort of book that Anita Brookner favours either. There was a degree of unpleasantness involved.

But horror-writers, no less than other men, are affected by success. They begin to think more highly of themselves. They may have started by grovelling in the dirt, but now they fancy something a bit nicer, a bit less... well, *horrid*. Rats, they say to themselves, are all very well for a younger man, but as one gets older one prefers something a bit more refined: stars, for example, stars that twinkle bwightly in the sky.

Portent, already gaily ascending the bestseller list, is one of the silliest excuses for a horror story ever issued. Or to put it another way, it's a New Age horror story.

In the near future; there's a big hole in the ozone layer and lots of pollution everywhere. Suddenly, pwetty, pwetty little twinkly balls of light start appearing all over the world, causing climatic upsets wherever they appear.

Whatever can it mean? Why, it's a sort of spiritual thingy. It's just like the "Gaia" theory of that Lovelock chap. Mother Earth is, as it were, herself alive, a kind of single organism, and she's not just interested in self-preservation either. No; she's changing purely to help mankind survive the damage done by his own ecological naughtiness. And who is helping her make this change? Sweet little New Age children, from all round the world, equipped with special psychic powers, of course. And who finds about this? Um, a man who works as a sort of elevated weather forecaster, actually.

It is not hard to imagine the dismay when this steaming pile of tosh appeared on the desk of Herbert's publisher. Very nice, James, but where's the ketchup? Where are the hideous gnawings, the vile pustulences, the rendings limb from limb? You've got until the weekend to put it right.

Herbert has duly attempted to dramatize this wretched fairy story by putting in a big, bad witch, who doesn't want any of these lovely new meteorological developments to happen. As a result of her opposition, they're all more violent than they need be. Yup, violent.

So a Canadian "silviculturalist" is roasted to death in a forest fire. An Australian diver is shredded in an underwater eruption. A Londoner is sliced in two by a sheet of glass in an earthquake. An Indian boy is steamed until he's done by a boiling geyser. A Californian girl is battered to bits by giant hailstones. Mass incinerations abound.

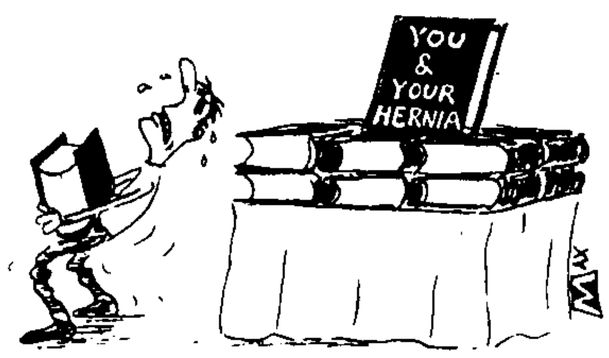
All very nice and juicy, too. Unfortunately, in the process Herbert has completely blown his New Age credentials. Far from being too nice, this is a very nasty book indeed. For his witch, the principle of all evil in the world, is a crudely caricatured black woman. Hugely fat, stupid and stinky, she drinks blood and excrement, insatiably tortures her sexual partners to death and tries to chomp up the dear little white children. She is revoltingly described: "thick, savage lips", "flat, misshapen nose", "gross belly", "protuberant nipples", "sweat-soaked stench".

Nor is this the casual racism usual in bestsellers — although Herbert has plenty of that too (when trying to imagine the effects of apocalyptic weather on different countries around the world, he comes up with this classic: "In Ireland potatoes were cooked in their fields").

This is sustained vilification. All the evil characters are black, all the black characters are evil. At one point, the genial weatherman, Rivers, is mugged by a black youth ("hate-filled eyes", "muscled brown arm" etc.) and you are meant to enjoy it when Rivers strikes him with a stick: "The blow was short, sharp and very hard. The black youth's broad nose became even broader, flattening itself with a cracking sound. The youth grunted and spittle shot from his mouth", etc.

Herbert should go back to rats. To be sure, as the bloody millennium approaches, we're all going to go very silly indeed, freely interpreting hosepipe bans in the light of the Book of Revelations, worshipping Freddie Mercury and taking John Major seriously. It's inevitable, we're already getting used to it.

But irrationality of this kind — hatred and bigotry worked up into apocalyptic fantasy — can well be avoided. And if, by the way, you fancy a bit of meteo-horror, J.G. Ballard was ten times better at it 20 years ago.

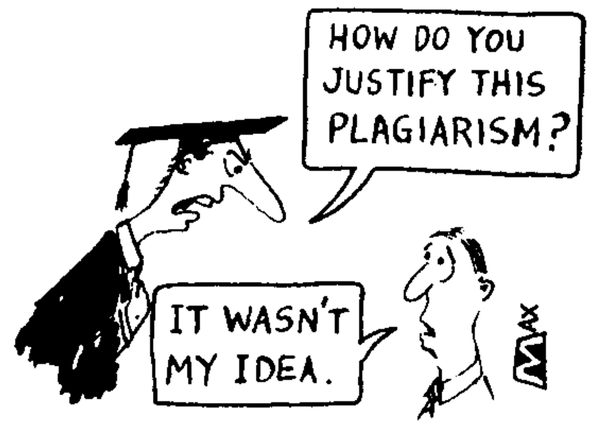


BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ **THE cloak-and-daggery behind this year's *Sunday Express* novel of the year award has been something for connoisseurs of the cock-up and corruption theories associated with literary prizes.**

The ceremony at Hatchards of Piccadilly was conspicuous by the non-presence of, until recently, the paper's long-serving literary editor, Graham Lord, who devised the award. Editor Eve Pollard, in her booming speech regretted that Lord Graham "wasn't able to be present tonight". Actually he was sitting at home by his telephone, his invitation having been mislaid by the postman.

On the morning of the award, the *Times* gossip column revealed that every penny of the money placed with bookmakers had been staked on one of the shortlisted titles: Robert Harris's *Fatherland*. Could this be because it was thought to be the favoured book of la Bollard, and might she have said as much in the office and been overheard by colleagues who hot-footed it to the nearest branch of William Hill, which took virtually all the money on the prize?



Could this be why, after Lord was purged from the judging panel between choosing the shortlist and selecting the winner, the paper's film critic Sheridan Morley was wheeled in at the last moment and Eve's clearly transferable vote went to Hilary Mantel's schoolgirl-like account of the French Revolution, *A Place of Greater Safety*, giving Viking — who won last year with Michael Frayn — the winner again of the irretrievably middlebrow prize?

The two women judges rooted for Mantle, the two men for Harris. La Bollard's decision was final, and none of the short-listed authors was invited to the dinner she gave for 20 of her closest cronies after the reception. No doubt the cost of the private dinner would be added to the cost of running the exotic award.

■ *ALSO awarded in the last fortnight was the McVitie's prize for the Scottish writer of the year, worth £10,000 compared with the Sunday Express's £20,000.*

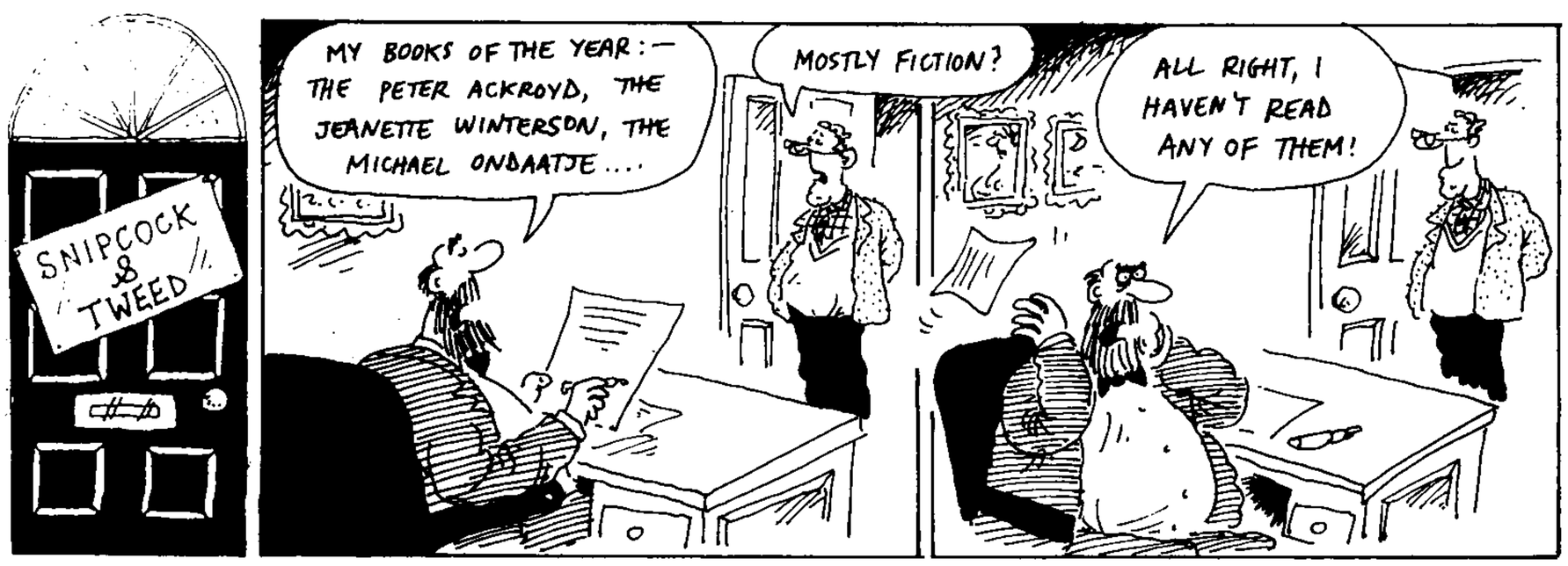
Against competition from Shena Mackay, Iain Banks, Iain Crichton Smith and Allan Massie, it went to composer John Purser for his account of Scotland's Music. Winners of the Sunday Express award were not, mercifully, obliged to read the paper; but Purser, in his acceptance speech in Glasgow, insisted that he would not have been able to complete his book in the wee hours had it not been for sustenance from Scotland's national drink and McVitie's digestive biscuits.

Martyn Goff, panjandrum of the Booker Prize, could do a lot worse than hire Rory Watson, this year's chairman of the McVitie's prize, as chairman of the Booker judges for 1993 as he made a superb speech assessing the merits of the shortlisted titles. Unlike the annual platitudes of the Booker chairperson, the speech was hardly reported.

☐ TIM WATERSTONE has been unusually silent on Waterstone's "pulling out" of its concession at Harrods, where its recently established branch displaced the admirable department run by ambitious yuppie David Wilkinson.

However well-dressed Tim Waterstone may be, his staff are notorious for their collective scruffiness. And as a rival bookseller put it: "You can't take a shit in Harrods without the Fayeds knowing about it." The Fayeds also objected to books being piled on the carpet, a usual happening at other Waterstone branches but not quite right, dear, at up-market Horrids. Besides which, turnover has plunged from what Wilkinson achieved, which wasn't the object of the exercise. Waterstone's leave Horrids on 30 September 1993: Dillons should move in on 1 October.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
MY BOOKS OF THE YEAR:— THE PETER ACKROYD, THE JEANETTE WINTERSON, THE MICHAEL ONDAATJE....
MOSTLY FICTION?
ALL RIGHT, I HAVEN'T READ ANY OF THEM!

ARMS DEALING

Mark Thatcher and Al Yummy-mummy

THE NATION'S press has been slow to react to the mounting interest in the possible involvement of the Son of Thatch in multi-million pound arms deals in the Middle East.

The recent Channel Four *Despatches* programme on the subject was generally thought "a little thin" — much of it had already appeared in the *Eye*. But at least *Despatches* broadcast a full report of the story.

The programme quoted Mark Teicher, the former official in Ronald Reagan's national security council whose job it was to monitor arms sales to the Middle East.

Specifically referring to the Al Yamamah deal, negotiated by Mrs Thatcher for Britain with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in 1985 and worth probably £20 billion, Teicher said he had been surprised to see *Mark* Thatcher's name crop up again and again in confidential diplomatic and intelligence reports connected with the arms deals. He played, said Mr Teicher, "a personal role" in these deals; and those associated with the deals and their commissions plainly believed they were commercially assisted by Mark Thatcher's involvement.

Mr Teicher is among many former officials in the Reagan government who have since broken with that government to denounce some of its more corrupt activities. He has no documents to support his allegations about Mark Thatcher, and he refused to break what he regarded as government confidences. But his appearance on television is the first sign from any government official that Mark Thatcher made money from Al Yamamah and/or associated deals.

The significance of this, if true, hardly needs underlining. It would mean, as *Despatches* made clear, that the Thatchers were in breach of the rules laid down for cabinet ministers about their and their family's business interests.

How has the Mark Thatcher secret been kept under wraps for so long? One answer emerged from Sarkis Soghanalian, who bought arms for the Iraqis and is now in jail in the United States. Soghanalian told the programme how he met Mark Thatcher with an executive of United Scientific Instruments while he was negotiating a contract to buy tank night sighters in 1983.

At first the firm would not discuss the matter at all with the programme makers. But when documents were produced proving that the sighter contract was signed between United Scientific Instruments and the Iraqi government, via Soghanalian, the company admitted it had sold the goods (the embargo on Iraq had not yet been imposed) but denied the involvement of Mark Thatcher.

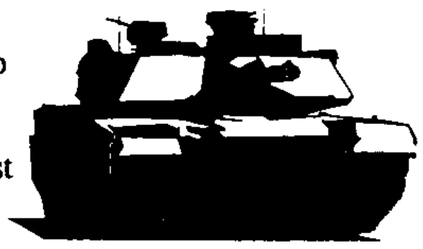
Stung by the denial, Soghanalian recounted his meeting with Thatcher in the foyer of the Carlton Tower hotel in London. A USI company executive had introduced him to Thatcher, who shook his hand and made small talk. Soghanalian says he took the meeting as a tacit indication that the British government supported the deal, which was indeed backed by the exports credit guarantee department.

Soghanalian's description of the Mark Thatcher role closely matches another account from the former Israeli intelligence agent, Ari Ben Menashee. Menashee is a well-known and highly suspect source in the journalistic underworld which investigates the arms trades. But in his recently-published book, *The Profits of War*, he gives a long account of his meeting with Mark Thatcher in the offices of the Chilean arms dealer Carlos Cardoen. Cardoen was probably the largest conduit from the American arms industry to Saddam Hussein, and Menashee says he was sent to Chile by the Israeli government to try to bribe and bully the arms dealer to stop supplying Baghdad.

He says Cardoen introduced him to Mark Thatcher, he believes to indicate to the Israeli that the British government was supporting the trade. The actual meeting with Thatcher was uncannily similar to that described by Soghanalian: a brief word about being the son of a famous person, a nod and a wink, and then away. If such meetings did take place they explain exactly the "personal role" referred to by Mr Teicher — it was just the presence of the young man, nothing else, which was required. His mere presence as a kind of "angel" indicated that there were top people backing the deals. The undocumented informality of the deals (plus Mark's known predilection for Swiss bank accounts) makes them very difficult to trace or prove.

Thatcher *fils* has studiously refused to comment when approached about the deals. He and his mother would not say a word to *Despatches*. Occasionally the ad-man Sir Tim Bell will speak off the record to journalists and describe all the talk about Mark Thatcher and the arms trade as "plain balls" (his words to Russell Miller of the *Sunday Times*, whose profile of Mark is the longest on record).

At the time of its deal with Soghanalian, United Scientific Instruments was headed by Peter Levene. Less than a year after it was completed, Levene (now knighted) was personally headhunted by Margaret Thatcher to take charge of government arms sales. In the same year the first signatures were put on the Al Yamamah deal.



CHARITY

Purley Queen

JENNIFER GOULD, a "sarf" Londoner in her forties, has carved a comfortable niche for herself among charities such as MIND, the British Sports Association for the Disabled, SENSE and the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation as a producer of revenue who drums up advertising for various brochures and yearbooks.

Regular advertisers who have supported Gould's operation in Church Street, Croydon, over the past six years include big names like Rover, Ford, Esso and Carlsberg.

It is doubtful, however, that any of these has checked into her operation and its methods. Now into her fifth company in as many years — the previous four all ceased trading — Gould's sales methods might not meet with the approval of the charities she represents.

The technique involves up to 10 tele-sales staff, often young and inexperienced, running a bank of telephones and, at Gould's instigation, using false names when calling potential advertisers. They are told to obtain advertising for the many brochures and yearbooks their company produces. Sometimes print runs of 50,000 are promised when only voucher and file copies are produced. Staff work mainly on commission-only and spot bonuses are offered for the best performers so there is every incentive to cut corners.

Unsuspecting advertising departments are asked to repeat advertisements they are told they placed a year or so before. In many cases no such advertisement was ever placed, but often the victims will agree without checking back. Others who profess no knowledge of an earlier ad are faxed a copy of one they placed with another charity, but with the name tippexed out and the name of a new charity stripped in. It always worked and Gould's company pocketed 50 percent of the spend.

The technique is profitable enough to sustain Gould in a swish home in Purley Rise, Purley, just outside Croydon, complete with housekeeper. Others dealing with the various companies, including her staff, have not been so lucky and have been left whistling for their money.

Other companies which have ceased trading in various circumstances include J.A. Gould Limited, which opened in September 1986 and ceased trading to make way for Creative Images (UK) Ltd. That went into liquidation in July 1990, and the similarly named Creative Images Ltd went into liquidation in September that year to make way for Strategic Sales Initiative Limited. It in turn ceased trading last August.

Angry SSI creditors are preparing an approach to the official receiver over the circumstances of its demise and the phoenix-like return to business-as-usual through the simultaneous formation of yet another Gould company. This time it is called Ultimate Creations and operates with the same staff, from the same office, with the same equipment and contracts.

On the day officials arrived to close SSI, Gould, in a rare act of personal charity, hustled staff out of the building and into a cafe across the road where she plied them with tea and sandwiches. Two trusted lieutenants were left to greet the visitors and claim to be clearing up the office.

Gould then scurried off to the nearby London Road offices of John Blanford, her solicitor and bowling partner who works for Barnes, Harrild & Dyer, and returned in minutes to the office with a signed document preventing removal of office equipment.

The visitors were kept away from a second-floor office which contained banks of telephones and other equipment, and within minutes of their departure staff were called back to work.

Ultimate Creations is, however, already having difficulty paying its bills, and loyal staff are paid on a "subject to availability" basis. One young staffer who decided to leave and asked to be paid up to date was threatened by Gould that she would "get hurt" if she pursued her claim.

The threat was tape recorded and, after notifying police, a letter was sent to Gould requesting an apology and the owed money. A week later Blanford wrote back on behalf of his client without apologising and claiming that Gould's threat had been made "on an emotional level". A number of inquiries which had been made about Gould's maze of companies were "only comment and did not merit reply".

HEALTH

More Ackers

REGULAR *Eye* readers might have been amused to hear a squirming Sir James Ackers on BBC's *Today* programme last week explaining why he didn't think he had to resign as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

But despite assurances that all was well, skeletons keep popping out of the closet — or, in the case of the 107-acre Rubery Hollymoor former mental hospital, popping out of the ground.

Rubery Hollymoor, one of the biggest development sites in the West Midlands, has emerged as a mass unofficial cemetery where former patients were buried.

Readers will already be familiar with the catalogue of RHA blunders; and the audit commission is now set to add Rubery Hollymore and the RHA division responsible, Landmark, to its growing list of pending probes.

Landmark is the former property and estates division which was set to follow Qa (see *Eyes passim*) into privatisation, along with its 200 staff. But it has proved unable to cope and the RHA has been forced to postpone its sell-off and pump in millions of pounds.

Landmark's staff, appropriately housed in a mental hospital, Barnsley Hall, know they are marking time. But they have got their revenge by disrupting Ackers's attempts to sell off to developers all the hospitals he has closed.

Besides inconveniently "discovering" the bodies of former mental patients buried around Rubery Hollymore, they have also sold off dozens of staff houses there and at other hospitals, thus massively reducing the sites' values. Now Ackers has ordered them to be bought back, with gleeful NHS staff forcing the RHA to cough up two or three times more than they paid.

The auditor is closing in again, although he's several millions of pounds too late.

BRITISH RAIL

Cut and don't run

THE job cuts announced by British Rail last month herald a vicious round of service cuts and line closures. As managers at the already pitiful Network SouthEast run out of money, for example, they are considering scrapping peak and off-peak services, reducing the number of carriages on trains and cutting branch line services to the bare bone.

Such short-term economies can have disastrous long-term effects on rail services — but then short-termism is a speciality of a government whose myopia over transport has now become total blindness.

The public-spending squeeze imposed on BR means any projects to which it is not already committed will have to be ditched. (In the south-east this means there will be no £12 million refurbishment of London Bridge).

BR's signalling — not exactly pristine (see *Eye* 801) — will fall into such disrepair engineers will have no choice but to stop services over affected routes. And BR will have to make available whatever it can for safety work by... reducing the number of trains it runs.

Some managers have been asked to produce budgets for next year *10 percent* lower than this year's. Since costs are already pared to the bone, this will inevitably result in fewer trains.

The government's non-transport policy is further evidenced by the parlous state of the railway manufacturing industry. It takes many years to design, test and build a new train, and makers are now trying to plan their five to ten-year strategies. With the treasury bumping along month to month, the only strategy they can plan is huge job cuts and possible factory closures.

The chief executive of ABB Transportation (formerly BREL) has already said his company will be mortally wounded if it is not awarded a major train-building contract by early 1993, in which case closure of either the York or Derby workshops looks inevitable. The number of jobs at risk in rail manufacturing is not far short of the 31,000 threatened coal-mining jobs. Like the coal mines, the complex train assembly lines, once closed, cannot be restarted if a new team wakes the treasury from its coma.

The vague notion of rail privatisation is also causing damage. As early as last summer a major order for electric trains for West Yorkshire was abandoned because the uncertainty of privatisation meant train builders and the local transport authority could not agree a leasing deal. Instead the county's multimillion-pound electrification scheme will have to make do with decaying trains from the Network SouthEast scrapheap.

The future of rail investment looks even bleaker under privatisation. A typical five-year franchise is not long enough for a franchise holder to reap much reward from equipping a route with new rolling stock. And leasing companies may well be put off striking deals with companies that could be out of business in five years' time.

It is possible that this bungling government is simply ignorant of all these consequences. But it is also possible the myopia disguises a sinister intent. Now people have lost interest in buying new cars, the road lobby is a hungry beast.

The service cuts and line closures [illegible] also be a way to prune BR before its sell-off. [illegible] will take the rap — and its successors' hands will [illegible] be bloodied.

"I do not have a ticket. This is due to payment failure at Charing Cross. I apologise to British Rail for any inconvenience which this may cause"

THORP

Open or shut case?

OPEN SEASON has been declared on the biggest white elephant in history: Sellafield II, the still-to-be switched on thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) in Cumbria that cost more than £1.8 billion and nobody sensible wants to use.

Scottish Nuclear's decision not to send its spent fuel rods there to have them turned into plutonium will save it £45 million a year. Instead it plans to stick its rods in dry storage, the solution favoured by environmentalists.

There is a strong suspicion in England that Nuclear Electric would like to do the same; but it has had its arm twisted to send its rubbish to Cumbria to keep the nuclear fuel cycle alive. Meanwhile, there are clear signs that even the government is trying to distance itself from THORP.

Michael Heseltine's trade department has written to British Nuclear Fuels and to the two nuclear generators to say that it will no longer be liable for underwriting the escalating cost of decommissioning the plant (as much as £2 billion), nor for meeting future environmental regulations.

This is pretty eccentric when the generating companies are nationalised and BNFL has only one shareholder: the president of the board of trade himself, Michael Heseltine. In fact the letter is meaningless because whatever happens at Sellafield will be down to the government. It cannot disown its own creatures.

The growing anti-THORP trend is spreading panic through BNFL as it becomes evident that it may never be allowed to operate the plant. The company views THORP as its continuing *raison d'être*, even though it could only make economic sense if there were a huge hike in uranium prices and demand for plutonium.

Uranium remains cheap and abundant, so the only practical civil use of plutonium — turning it into mixed oxide (Mox) fuel for existing nuclear reactors — is uneconomic. As plutonium is lethally radioactive and toxic, stocks have become a big liability as its safe storage is expensive. There is already a glut of 150 tonnes worldwide, which will double when nuclear warheads are dismantled. The logic of adding a further 150-200 tonnes to the stockpile through reprocessing over the next 10 years is now obvious only to BNFL.

Nevertheless the company pressed ahead with its plan to start operating early next year, presumably on the assumption that once "active", the monstrous cost of decommissioning would persuade an unenthusiastic government to let reprocessing continue.

But BNFL received a further shock last month when the new draft discharge authorisations it is seeking to accommodate THORP's operations were released for consultation. Environmental groups seized on a proposed tenfold increase in the radioactive gas Krypton-85 as an unacceptable health and environmental hazard. While the health risk is hardly negligible — the emissions could cause up to 10 fatal cancers — it is the impact the gas could have on the climate that is the big worry.

Krypton will increase the electrical conductivity of the atmosphere, and only this year a report commissioned by the department of the environment said: "There is an urgent need for further investigation of the possible adverse effects of an increased electrical conductivity of the earth's atmosphere at low altitudes." The author was no left-wing anti-nuclear group, but the UK Atomic Energy Authority.

BNFL has conspicuously failed to develop Krypton-removal technology, so fitting it before start-up would delay the project for years. As the treasury has insisted, it will sanction no more capital expenditure on THORP.

The pollution inspectorate's circular to local authorities and leading campaigning organisations asking for views on radioactive discharges from Sellafield before it will give authorisation for THORP to start up, is just one problem. Environmentalists have been demanding another public inquiry before THORP opens, and it looks increasingly as if the government is thinking along similar lines — chiefly for money reasons. It appears to want critics of its policy to save it from sinking deeper into the nuclear mire by keeping the talking going for as long as possible.

Signs are that the government is belatedly drawing the logical conclusion from its decision, three years ago, to halt the programme of building 10 pressurised water reactors, and is finally recognising that there is no future for nuclear power in Britain.

LUNATICS

Alas Smith and Frost

OUR REPORT on sinister right-wing activist A.V.R. Smith (see last *Eye*) produced immediate results, as reported in the *Observer* the following Sunday.

Smith had just been taken on by the PR firm run by nasally-challenged Sir Tim Bell, former adviser to Baroness Thatcher. Despite Lowe Bell Communications' protestations,the firm had been fully aware of Smith's connections with Western Goals and the World League for Freedom and Democracy, though presumably it had not been aware of his expulsion from the latter organisation for taking a Filipino bar-girl with him to a conference in Taiwan.

After roughly 10 days working for Lowe Bell, Smith was dismissed on 22 November.

In earlier years Smith, now 28, was involved in mainstream Tory politics: well, in the Federation of Conservative Students, anyway, which belonged to the Conservative party but was in the grip of the libertarian fringe. A few years ago, when he first became embroiled with Western Goals, Smith fell under the influence of Gregory Lauder-Frost, a Scotsman who had been a member of the Monday Club and was the nephew of the entertainer Sir Harry Lauder.

Last week Lauder-Frost was sentenced to two years' imprisonment after he pleaded guilty to eight specimen charges of fraud. He had embezzled £111,000 from the Riverside health authority, where he worked as a pay controller. This amount represented the monies transferred to Lauder-Frost through UK clearing banks; but police believe he may have defrauded the NHS of close to half a million pounds, salted away in offshore accounts.

Where was the money going? In mitigation Frauder-Lost said he had been using it to fund a custody battle over his daughter with his ex-wife, now living in the United States. The crown prosecution service (CPS), however, knows precisely how much was spent in this respect and it is a mere fraction of the sums embezzled. The bulk of the money would seem to have been ploughed into Eastern Europe and Russia, where Lauder-Frost was running tea-shops and bookshops in St Petersburg through a company called Korostovetz, Russia & Co. Ltd.

Co-director of this enterprise with Lauder-Frost is a Mrs Valiya Schooling, a Scottish resident of Ukrainian extraction who is a member of the Roxburgh and Berwickshire Conservative Association. The real business of Korostovetz was general import/export trading, with an emphasis on a variety of products with Russian military links. A letter from one Russian contact has writing on it in A.V.R. Smith's hand which says that the source "will do almost anything on the military list, i.e. subs, planes (Antinov 10s), ammo, tanks..."

Certainly, through his freebies with right-wing governments, Smith had the contacts in Central America, South Africa and the Phillipines who might be interested in purchasing this sort of hardware. The police have Lauder-Frost's list of contacts for commercial dealings in Russia, Latvia and Bulgaria, and are continuing to investigate his activities.

When Lauder-Frost was arrested last February he was released on police bail and his passport confiscated. In July he applied successfully to have his passport returned so he could make a 10-day visit to the US to tidy up affairs with his ex-wife. Instead he went east and spent the time in Russia on business.

A.V.R. Smith has been interviewed by police and, amazingly, Lauder-Frost's lawyers were considering calling him as a character witness until they heard the CPS had been examining the *Eye* and *Observer* articles on him.

In the City

FORMER Jim Slater lieutenant Ian Wasserman has joined the casualties of the recession: "Ian the Deal" has had to enter into a deed of arrangement with his creditors who were owed £1.4 million.

This agreement, reached last March, may help to explain Wasserman's sudden departure after 10 years from the chairmanship of G.M. Firth (Metals) a year ago, when he also sold his shares in the steel stockholders.

Wasserman's creditors were two firms of stockbrokers, Branston & Gothard (£416,000) and Hichens Harrison (£340,000), together with the Jack Dellal linked Allied Commercial Exporters (£651,000).

As part of the arrangement Wasserman had to sell his Chelsea home and pledge various investments, antiques and insurance policies, as well as from 25 to 50 percent of his income or share-dealing profits above £50,000 a year.

All a long, long way from the heady days when he was a Slater Walker director. When it collapsed, Wasserman was revealed as owing £150,000 to the company. But as many who know Wasserman would say: It couldn't happen to a nicer man.

WASSERMAN's ex-boss, meanwhile, goes from strength to strength, aided by the collective amnesia that seems to affect almost all those who write about the one-time minus millionaire and convicted company law breaker.

Mail on Sunday readers were treated in October to the serialised investment wisdom from Slater's new book. They may like to know that — as any *Eye* reader would have expected — recent recommendations for Slater's supposed hot stock Wharfedale has gone the way of all such "Changi Jim" tips. Recommended by the *Sunday Times* and *Daily Mail* earlier this year on the basis of the Slater shareholding at 21-23p, shares in Wharfedale now Verity Group are now 9p.

Surprisingly, in his new book *The Zulu Principle — Making Extraordinary Profits from Ordinary Shares*, Slater does not explain how it helps for gullible financial hacks to write up your investments so that you can get out as their dumb readers pile in.

THERE is growing concern in police circles as to what the impact may be on Scotland Yard's fraud squad of the reforms being considered by the Sheehy committee set up by home secretary Kenneth Clarke.

Suggested changes being mooted from within Scotland Yard range from merely reducing it and other central, specialist Yard CID departments (other than the anti-terrorism branch) by taking away 10 percent of the detective manpower, to wholesale abolition with fraud inquiries devolved downwards to divisional level.

Just how such changes would help the fight against major fraud is hard to see with fraudsters becoming increasingly sophisticated and fraud increasingly international. Such moves as passing fraud over to divisional or regional fraud squads (with the eventual loss of concentrated expertise) would also seem to contradict the policy enshrined in the creation of the serious fraud office (SFO) which reflected the need to centralise major fraud investigation. There are, however, cynics who see the SFO as wanting to turn the police into bag carriers controlled by lawyers and accountants, a view which might not oppose the dismantling of Britain's largest fraud squad. Considerable politicking is now taking place inside Scotland Yard over the reforms to be recommended to Sheehy which will put 800 more sets of police feet back on the street. Certain senior CID officers believe the outcome could well be a move to downgrade if not dismantle the Fraud Squad. A move which can only give the bad guys cause for celebration.

FAITHFUL to the last, *Sunday Times* City editor Jeff Randall continues to defend his friend and hero Philip Green.

The SFO and the department of trade and industry may be on the Amber Day case, but Randall is still on Green's side. His latest helpful contribution was to explain, ahead of publication, why Green deserved his £1.1 million pay-off when resigning as chairman and chief executive, and that the company had given him a clean bill of health over certain transactions. Alas such loyalty, while touching and no doubt wholly deserved, will only serve to fuel unmerited speculation among the mean spirited about the Green/Randall relationship despite, as the *Sunset Times* knows, it being at all times perfectly proper.

'Slicker'

ASIL Nadir and the rise and fall of Polly Peck by *Financial Times* journalist David Barchard is a book singularly lacking in substantive revelation and devoid of meaningful criticism. It treads almost worshipfully in the Asilikhan path of the *Sultan of Berkeley Square* published last year. But then both Barchard and Tim Hindle approach Nadir and Polly Peck from a shared position influenced by their personal links to Turkey, a fact that undoubtedly helped in obtaining access to the Nadir circle.

Barchard's access was so considerable it is hard to avoid the impression that his book has Asil-authorised status. Certainly it shows little scepticism about the reality of Polly Peck which enabled a company supposedly making profits of more than £200 million a year to collapse within weeks, leaving shareholders with nothing and creditors owed more than £1 billion with little more.

Barchard is handicapped by Nadir's impending fraud trial on charges concerning the alleged theft of more than £150 million from the company he founded, matters which are therefore omitted, like much of relevance to the real story.

But why write now if the purpose is to tell the *whole* story, as distinct from a sanitized, sympathetic version helpful to the Nadir mythmakers? The *Eye* coverage of Polly Peck was viewed in Turkey, we learn, as "products of the Greek propaganda machine". All too often Barchard's book reads like the product of the still well-oiled Nadir machine.

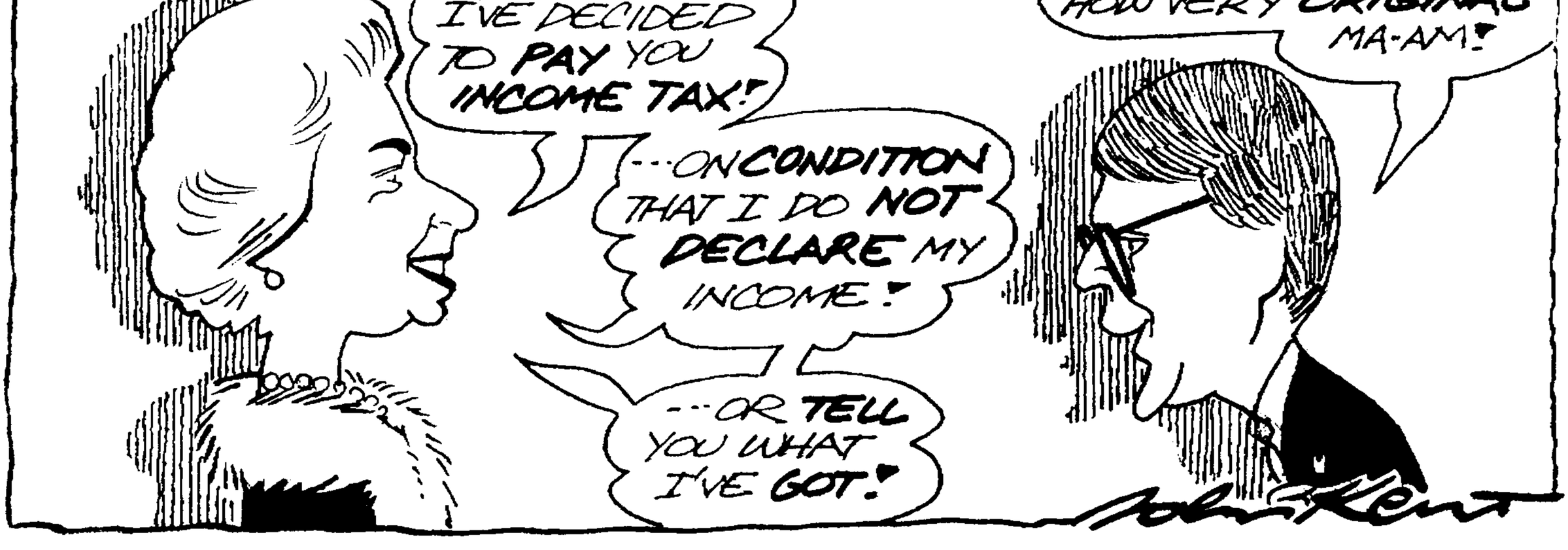
The book is sprinkled with flattering judgements of Nadir. "Star of the London business world with the miracle touch." "Asil Nadir was fascinating, charming and deeply sensitive to the feeling of whoever he was talking to." "An indomitable spirit." "Almost uncanny negotiating skills, brilliance as a commodities dealer... an intuitive grasp of strategic opportunities... undeniable vision and originality." Get the picture?

Barchard — formerly the *FT*'s man in Turkey, has, the Gollancz PR puff informs us, "known Asil Nadir for years" — at times seems so carried away by his admiration as to be hopelessly naive. Such as to why Nadir preferred to put his Eastern empire into a new company, Polly Peck, where he owned 60 percent rather than the existing public company Wearwell where he owned only 12 percent. Or as to why the magistrate set bail at £3.5 million for a man with three passports and a homeland with which Britain does not have an extradition agreement.

Naiveté may not explain, however, the omission of unflattering information such as the City police investigation into Wearwell share dealings or the background to the prosecution for theft of the husband of Elizabeth Forsyth, Nadir's banking adviser, not to mention the constant pattern of inspired buying and selling of Polly Peck shares over several years. But then Barchard, who wrote reviews for Nadir's magazine (a fact he discloses) clearly never agreed with those who — failing to give Nadir the credit he deserves — merely termed Nadir "a familiar kind of spiv".

While Nadir is never quoted directly, the wealth of personal detail about his early life and access to his family and friends (along with the contempt problem) help explain why Barchard leaves so much unexplained — such as how Nadir managed to get away with the Polly Peck profit mirage for so long and what happened to all the money poured into Northern Cyprus.

"It is too early for any but the most preliminary judgements on Asil Nadir," concludes Barchard — other, that is, than for those that flatter to deceive. Barchard emerges as being as beguiled by Nadir as all those in the City who bought the shares and made the loans. Like those believers, he refers constantly to critics and enemies, Greek plots and journalists doubling as spies or agents of private investigators. No doubt this family portrait will sell well in Turkey.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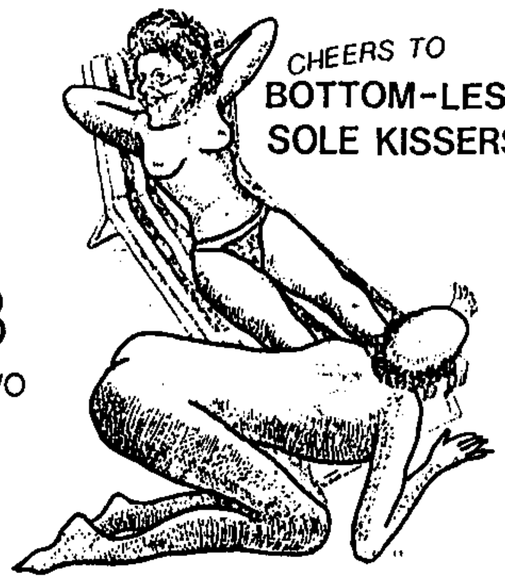

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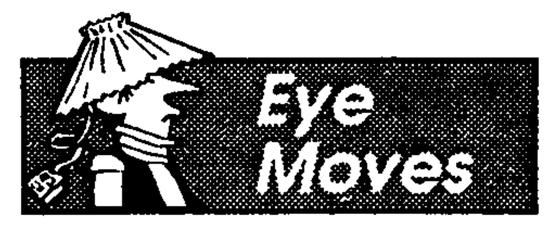

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BERKSHIREMAN, 31, seeks gigging, swigging, bookish football-loving ladyfriend. Box 8607.

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TALL SLIM HANDSOME professional man, fit forties, seeks beautiful discreet younger mistress. Scotland/London. Box 6804.

TALL SENSUAL redhead early 30s seeks handsome intelligent playmate to spoil and pamper her with champagne lunches, erotic afternoons etc. Discretion essential, photo appreciated. Box 11108.

THINK OF A MAN with resource and a plan / For apple wood fires and roaring romance / With dangerous woman, your singing soul / I yearn for you in my ancient oak home. Box 2408.

ATTRACTIVE FEMALE, 30, Wirral, requires romance. Letter and photo please. Box 2508.

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MAN, 37, good-humoured, balanced, physical, seeks partner who is some or all of: slender, witty, kind, demure, full-bosomed, special. London, elsewhere. Box 2808.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, single, openminded, 38, tall, dark arguably handsome, seeks female 25/35, N. West, will travel. Box 2908.

NORTH-WEST PROFESSIONAL mamle, 32, reasonably good-looking notwithstanding ginger hair, seeks humorous, honest, slim attractive female for fun and friendship. Box 3008.

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ATTRACTIVE WELL-BRED independent woman 40 (no hang ups) seeks successful unattached n/s male to complement sense of humour and fun essential. Photo appreciated. Box 3208.

FUR COAT on fair lady 23-40 with long hair is sought to be cuddled by 6'2" successful lawyer in 40s. London area. Box 3308.

TALL EASY GOING male, simple tastes and pleasures, seeks similar female for laughs, talks, thgouths and lots of snuggling up together. Box 3408.

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MARRIED MAN seeks married woman in London, Essex area for short torrid affair with champagne and roses. Photo guarantees reply. Box 3608.

MAN, 37, TALL, svelte, appealing, attractive and intelligent. Desires good female mind under 32 in gorgeous exterior with nice legs. (A fashion model with A-levels would be fine, of course.) London. Box 3708.

DIVORCED MAN 44 n/s, tall lean, seeks intelligent slim lady for fun, outings, laughter etc. Lets see what develops? N/W, anywhere. Photo please. Box 3808.

GORGEOUS 5'8" London opera/arts woman, wanting independent solvent man aged 29-39. Box 3908.

TERESA SEEKS Lewis Dodd. Box 4008.

FAR EAST BASED professional man, mid forties, twice bitten and a little poorer for it, seeks positive young attractive lady with mature mind to share some fun in life. Enjoys tennis, scuba, good music, food and wine and regular travel. Please send full photograph and we can meet anywhere. Box 2208.

PROFESSIONAL MALE 30s seeks intelligent female. Cumbria. Box 2308.

MARVELLOUSLY IMMORAL apostrophe-free ex-maniac (28, female, Birmingham based) seeks hunky, local tall anti-hero(es) for wine, witticism and wicked ways. Box 4108.

BORED LADY? Add some spice to your life. Edinburgh based. Box 4208.

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SILK STOCKINGED lover wanted, 35-45, for younger man (31) with great sense of adventure. North West/Midands. Photo please. Box 4508.

OVERACTIVE SLIM intelligent sensitive male made in 1959 seeks lady for fun. Life is short, let's do it. Box 4608.

BIG MAN, 31, 6'2", muscular, hunky, clever, handsome, professional, London based, looking for good looking female with humour for some serious discussion and good times. Box 4708.

GENTLEMAN, MARRIED, not dead, early 40s, seeks lady friend for amusing dinner dates, Midlands/anywhere. Box 4808.

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